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["HELEN AND RUPERT!" CRIED A VOICE IN A HIGH KEY OF AMAZEMENT.]

HELEN'S DILEMMA.

CHAPTER XXX.

It may be inconceivable to some people that any girl could be so treacherous and so crafty as Blanche Despard; but we all know that "the heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked;" and Miss Blanche, in addition to a naturally oblique, hard, cruel disposition, had what she considered wrongs of her own to avenge.

She had loved her cousin Rupert as much as it was in her power to care for anyone; and before Helen Brown had come between them he had certainly seemed to derive a certain amount of pleasure from her society.

In her heart of hearts she could not conceal from herself that he cared for her only in a cousinly way, but she had had sanguine hopes of increasing his liking to a warmer and tenderer temperature.

Very delightful were their strolls about the garden, their afternoon rides, their games of tennis. His notes and letters from abroad were

models of their kind—friendly, confidential, amusing, and full of good-humoured sketches of John Bull and Uncle Sam.

Delightful, too, were the little gifts that he never failed to bring home in his hand; and more delightful than all was it to see him return again and again from his wanderings entirely and unmistakably heart whole.

Some people's pride is easily aroused, and she had succeeded (with the assistance of her warm imagination and untrammelled tongue) beyond her fondest expectations in erecting a barrier between Rupert and Miss Brown that parted them quite as effectually as if the whole world divided them.

Opportunities arose now of meeting each other, and neither of them chose to avail themselves of the occasion.

Sir Rupert was invited to the Towers's house by a young guardsman of his acquaintance, to whom Mrs. Towers had given carte blanche to bring any of his friends.

"I say, Lynn," he exclaimed, accosting him in Piccadilly, "I'm going to a tea-fight this afternoon in rather a jolly house—will you

come? Don't say no if you'd like to say yes."

"A tea fight!" echoed his friend, with raised brows, and an expression on his face that showed unmistakably in what very cheap estimation he held the proffered entertainment. "No, thank you, my dear fellow, I never lend myself to that sort of dissipation. I draw the line at tea!"

"But there are other inducements," continued the guardsman, persistently. "Not to mention music, ices, and heaps of pretty girls, there is the host's ward, or niece, or whatever she is—a powerful attraction in herself. You have heard of her, of course—the Tasmanian beauty, Miss Brown—eh?"

"Yes, I have heard of her," replied her former lover, in a tone of well assumed indifference, rapping his leg with his cane, and avoiding his interlocutor's eyes.

"You ought to know her," proceeded the other, with increased animation. "It is a duty that every eligible, or ineligible, bachelor owes to himself—a presentation to Miss Brown. She really is awfully pretty, no nonsense about it; and there is no doubt whatever

about the cash. I'll call for you about five, and you shall see the enchantress for yourself. Who knows but that she may be your fate, eh?" bestowing a playful poke to his friend's ribs; "and I shall have all the credit and the *clat* of having launched you both into matrimony."

"Many thanks, my dear fellow, for your amiable intentions; but it is, unfortunately, quite out of my power to avail myself of your friendly offices. I have an engagement with Brook. He wants me to look at a couple of cobs he is thinking of buying—and I promised to give my very valuable advice."

"And you would rather go and look at a pair of horses than come and be introduced to the prettiest girl in London!" said the guardsman, in a disgusted tone. "Well, everyone to their taste!—but I can't say much for yours! At any rate, it's not an offer that will go begging—and here comes Maybrick! Ta-ta!"

A few mornings later, Mr. and Mrs. Towers and Helen were seated at the breakfast-table, discussing their engagements for the day—the entertainment of the previous evening—and opening various highly-scented and brilliantly monogrammed notes. Mr. Towers was buried in the morning paper, above the edge of which the top of his shiny bald-head was just visible—though he occasionally appeared from behind it to swallow some coffee, or a mouthful of cold raised pie.

"Does not Sir Rupert Lynn live down near the Despard's?" he suddenly asked, lowering his paper, and looking towards Helen.

"Yes!" she answered, with a sudden suffusion of colour. "His place is within two miles!"

"Then you must have known him?" continued Mr. Towers, sharply. "You know him then—eh?" he reiterated, by no means blind to his young friend's sudden confusion.

"Yes, I knew him—once!" she returned, significantly.

"And you cut him now! Ah!—well, I suppose he was mixed up in that business—?"

A faint assent was his only reply.

"Well, whatever grudge you may have against him, he is certainly a fine fellow. Just listen to this!" clearing his throat, and giving his spectacles an impressive hitch.

"Last night, between twelve and one o'clock, a fire broke out in a house in Albany-street. It appears that it had been smouldering for a considerable time; and that, when the flames burst out, they made such headway that the whole upper part of the house and stairs were in a blaze before the fire-engines could be summoned. Some of the inmates were rescued with the greatest difficulty. In one case, a man jumped from the third floor into a sheet spread out to receive him, and informed the crowd that another lodger—a youth—who was confined to his bed with a broken leg, after making frantic endeavours to gain the stairs had, by this time, succumbed to the flames. On hearing this, one of the bystanders dashed into the house, scaled the fiery staircase, and shortly afterwards appeared at the open window with the boy in his arms. A roar of many voices greeted his appearance, and the crowd surged to-and-fro with throbbing excitement, as they beheld the pair above them, standing out distinctly against a ruddy background, and heard the loud crash of the falling staircase.

"It was, indeed, a moment of intense suspense, till the fire-escape reached the third story. Seconds were of priceless moment, for the flames were spreading fast. There was a general gasp of relief as the crowd beheld the adventurous stranger descending the ladder—a very difficult feat—with his helpless prize in his arms.

"They had barely reached *terra firma* when the floor of the room that they had just quitted fell in with a sound of thunder; and the window, in which they had been standing,

sixty seconds previously, was simultaneously enveloped in sheets of flame.

"It appears that the fire originated in the upsetting of a kerosene lamp in one of the bedrooms, and that the conflagration had extended to the very curtains of the bed before its horrified occupant had realized the catastrophe.

"The dense mass of people who were assembled in the street received the lame boy and his deliverer with enthusiasm. The former was wholly unscathed; but the gentleman who had risked his life on his behalf had his clothes and his hair scorched, and one of his arms very badly burnt. Evidently he is one of those who do good deeds and blush to find them fame, for he declined to give his name or address. And having made over his charge to the care of a relative vanished in the crowd.

"We have since learned that the name of this gallant young gentleman is Sir Rupert Lynn, of Canew, County Kent, formerly an officer in the Black Hussars."

"Now, that's the sort of thing that stirs up my old blood!" said Mr. Towers, laying down the paper. "I should like to know that young man. I think Stanton is a friend of his, and I'll get an introduction through him, and ask him to dinner. Eh! what do you say, Helen, or has he offended past forgiveness?"

"Of course, you can ask him, if you please," replied Helen, quietly; "but I think you will find that he will not avail himself of your invitation. He is not more anxious to meet me than I am to meet him."

"It's not a quarrel, is it?" asked Mr. Towers, brusquely.

"My dear Tom! What are you thinking of?" cried his wife, aghast. "These are pretty manners! Don't meet him, Helen, it is no business of his; don't answer any of his questions. It is no affair of his when, how, or where, you quarrelled with this young baronet, who has taken such a hold on his fancy."

"I shall certainly take your advice," said Helen, rising to leave the room, with an ill-assumed air of gaiety. "I cannot possibly make you my father-confessor, Mr. Towers—you could hardly expect that."

When the door had closed, he cleared his throat, rubbed his spectacles, put them slowly on, and looked gradually through them at his wife, said very impressively—

"I'll tell you what it is, Em: She and that young fellow have had some love-passages between them. Believe me, I can see as far into a milestone as most. Her face was the colour of the rising sun the moment his name was mentioned! Shall I ask him to dinner—eh? Help a lame dog over the stile?"

"No, no! on no account! Fancy an old man like you meddling in young people's love affairs! Just leave them to themselves! If they really care for one another, they will make it up; and if not, it is far better to just let them drift quietly apart."

CHAPTER XXXI.

BUT, in spite of Blanche's manoeuvres, in spite of their own disinclination, it was ordered by fate (who often takes these matters in hand) that Sir Rupert and Helen were to meet—to speak to each other.

It came about in this way. Lady Frances De Lacy, who was one of the smartest, gayest, most popular leaders of society, was giving a grand afternoon entertainment to half the *beau monde* in London at her villa on the Thames. The season was waning; it was now the middle of July, and it was positively the last appearance for this season of many fashionables who were on the eve of taking wing for the country or the Continent, and just had come down to "show themselves" at Lady Frances's fête.

The lawns and slopes were scattered over with a very brilliant, well-dressed crowd. Refreshments were served in the villa, though trays of tempting ices and strawberries were

carried about the lawns by six full-sized footmen with powdered hair. The Hungarian band was discoursing sweet music, and all was going as merry as a marriage-bell.

Under the shade of a magnificent lime tree Helen Brown was seated in a low wicker chair, slowly drawing a pattern on the grass with her white lace sunshade, and—responding to the soft nothings that a young man who sat slightly behind her was pouring into her ear with a languid—nay, a discouraging indifference.

"The beautiful Miss Brown" was the cynosure of many eyes, and quite one of the sights and one of the things to be seen on that warm, sleepy July afternoon.

She really received every encouragement to rank herself as a professional beauty, but she shrank with dismay from the flattering prospect. No, no; it gave her no pleasure to see hundreds of pairs of eyes turned on her with unconcealed curiosity or bold admiration. She did not feel a glow of honest pride when she beheld her last new photo publicly exhibited in a shop window between a popular burlesque actress and Cetewayo.

No, no! She despatched Mr. Towers to rescue it in hot haste—but it was gone! The shopman declared it had already been purchased by a tall, dark gentleman, who said that he was sure that there was some mistake in its appearing in such a manner. He had bought all the copies, and, strange to say, had torn them into little pieces, and left them in the shop!

Mr. Towers hastened back to his young ward, and told her this extraordinary tale with much animation. He did not again fail to remark her rising colour and her evident embarrassment.

"It was that fellow Lynn, I suppose," he remarked to his wife, as he stood at the door of his dressing-room, adorning himself for a dinner-party; and she subsequently heard him telling his reflection in the glass, as he angrily struggled with a refractory white tie, "that he could see as far into a milestone as most people."

To return to Helen after this long digression.

Helen, whom we left sitting under the lime tree, feeling rather bored, and looking supremely indifferent to all her surroundings—who were eating cream ices, flirting, and telling little society anecdotes, good and bad, under the shade of the same wide-spreading tree. Suddenly she beheld her hostess approaching—a dainty figure, in one of Worth's most novel combinations—and escorted by a gentleman, to whom she was talking volubly. His head was bent attentively towards the little lady by his side; but when, within a few yards of the tree, he raised it, Helen beheld the handsome and familiar features of Sir Rupert Lynn.

Little did Sir Rupert guess at the pitfall that was before him when Lady Frances had smilingly received him, scolded him playfully for being such a late arrival, and then told him that she wished to present him to a particular friend of hers, and to follow her without delay.

"Miss Brown," she said, in her clear, flute-like voice, apparently unobservant of the curiously hard-strained look on her young friend's face, and her rapid fluctuations of colour, "do you know Sir Rupert Lynn? Sir Rupert," smiling at her companion, who looked as if he had been turned into stone, "allow me to present you to Miss Brown!"

Two icy bows were the result of this unexpected introduction.

"Come, Sir Rupert, take Miss Brown to see my plant house; and if you will allow me, my dear"—turning, confidentially, to Helen—"I will take your chair. I shall be very glad of a little rest, for I have been standing the last two hours. I am quite done up!"

So Helen was regularly turned out; and she and her former lover were obliged to make the best of the matter, and to accept the embarrassing situation thus thrust on them with as good

a grace as they could muster. Indeed, Helen made a noble struggle for self-command, as she slowly rose, opened her parasol, and looked towards Sir Rupert with a cool little nod, as much as to say, "I am ready." The eyes of so many people were on her. People who seemed to know in some subtle, curious way that underneath this outward calmness, this studied composure, there lay some hidden romance—nay, perhaps some tragedy that was concealed from their curious eyes!

"Yes; there was something unnatural in the way that those two looked at each other," more than one clever penetrating lady spectator had declared to herself.

Soon they were slowly pacing the velvety lawn—Helen trailing her magnificent white gown behind her, and carrying her head unusually high.

Sir Rupert was very pale. He tightened his lips under his moustache with an air of fierce resolve, and at last he spoke.

"Do we meet as strangers, Miss Brown? or may I presume that we have known each other before?"

"As strangers—thank you, Sir Rupert. It will be as well to forget our last encounter, when you were good enough to offer me your charity," replied his companion, in a chilly tone.

"Yes, I suppose I have sinned past forgiveness. I know that I have no right to your leniency," he returned, in a low voice. "But even to meet again as strangers is better than nothing, if you will give me another chance—a fresh start, and let me make amends for the past in some way."

"Past!" echoed Helen; "we have no past. I thought we had agreed to bury it out of sight? Pray, do not forget that I am a stranger, whom you have never heard of, nor met until to-day. How could we possibly have a past in common?" raising her pretty brows with a smile of interrogation.

Her companion was prevented from making any immediate answer; for at this instant he was accosted by a sprightly lady in a costume of the latest and most aesthetic shade of green, who, approaching him with outstretched hands, exclaimed in a high, shrill voice.

"Is this true what I have just heard?"

"I cannot tell you, until you are more explicit," he returned, with a laugh.

"Mr. Barry has just told me that you are off to Rio Janeiro with Captain Torrens to-morrow. I declare I can compare you to nothing but the Wandering Jew! Is it true?"

"Yes; perfectly true. My passage is taken—my clothes are packed; for once you have been correctly informed!"

"And why are you going?" proceeded his questioner, in a key of remonstrance. "Surely you must have seen everything by this time, and have arrived at the conclusion that there's no place like home! He must have an uneasy conscience—must he not, Miss Brown?" to Helen, with whom she had a slight acquaintance. "What do you say?"

"Torrens is going out about some silver mines, and I am specially bound to see the Andes—the Amazon—the old half-buried cities of the Incas of Peru," interrupted Sir Rupert.

"I would have thought that the grouse-shooting next month would have appealed to you more; but I really begin to believe what I have more than once heard hinted," dropping her voice, and looking at Sir Rupert with a smile of mischievous significance.

"And what may that have been?" he asked, with a smile of interrogation.

"That you were the prey of unrequited love—that you have some hard-hearted, fair lady in the background who will not listen to your suit, and your mind knows no peace!"

"What utter nonsense!" exclaimed Sir Rupert, impatiently. "Do you mean to say that a fellow cannot take a trip abroad without all the old gossips setting their heads together and inventing some mysterious reason like—or—money or madness?"

"But you are always going abroad! You are a confirmed rambler!" persisted the lady.

"I really think that it is quite time for you to settle down and marry, and become a quiet, home-keeping member of society. Don't you agree with me, Miss Brown? Don't you think that it is quite time for him to be looking about him for a wife?" appealing suddenly to his companion.

Before Helen could frame a reply, Sir Rupert retorted.

"It is awfully good of you to take such a kind interest in me, Lady Ann; but I'm o'er young to marry yet, am I not? And as far as I can see, I shall never be a Benedict!" and muttering some excuse about Miss Brown and the plant house, he took off his hat and made a dignified retreat.

"What a vulgar, little busybody Lady Ann is! Who would believe that she was the daughter of a hundred earls to listen to her gossip!" said Sir Rupert, angrily.

"And are you really going abroad again so soon?" said Helen, with assumed indifference, and in a cool matter-of-fact voice.

"Yes; I have nothing much to keep me at home now!" he replied, with a significant inflexion on the last word. "And I suppose by the time I return I shall find you married?"

"I? I see no immediate prospect of the event!" said Helen, looking straight before her.

"But it is on the cards, is it not? I saw a paragraph about you in one of the society papers not very long ago."

"If you had looked into the same journal the following week you would have seen that ridiculous report flatly contradicted!" said Helen, with some asperity.

"Then you are not engaged to Lord Tavy Leaborough?" asked her companion, eagerly.

"No, I am not; but I really think, Sir Rupert, that for a stranger you ask singularly odd questions!"

"I beg your pardon!" he replied, humbly, and for some moments they paced the lawn in silence.

They seemed entirely to have forgotten the plant house—seemed oblivious of their surroundings, and indifferent as to where their steps tended.

They were naturally surprised when they found themselves alone in a lovely, deliciously cool, shady walk, where the branching trees overhead stretched out their grim garments and kept out the sun. The band and the buzz of hundreds of tongues sounded quite afar off as they strolled along, side by side, in this sequestered spot.

"I read an account of your exploit in the papers," said Helen, abruptly. It was not necessary to add that she nearly knew it off by heart—that the paragraph had been carefully cut out, and reposed among the most sacred treasures in her desk at home. "I must congratulate you on your great courage, and your marvellous escape!"

"Oh!" colouring with pleasure; "as to the courage, that was nothing. Any other fellow would have done the same."

"And why did they not?" interrupted Helen. "By all accounts there were thousands in the street. But you were the only one of them all who was ready to peril your life!"

"Ah, well, I daresay lots of them had wives and families; and I was pretty near the door. You must not think too much of what I did. Surely no one would stand by and see a helpless boy burned in his bed without trying to lend a hand?"

"You were scorched and burnt, were you not?"

"Oh, nothing to speak of—just a little singe on the arm I got going upstairs."

"How did you get upstairs? Were they not on fire?"

"Yes, the banisters and some of the carpeting was in a blaze; but I need not tell you that I did not loiter *en route*; they fell in about two minutes after. It was an old house, and burnt like brown paper. I would not have

believed that fire could spread in such a way if I had not seen it. It devoured everything before it—it was like a furnace."

"It must have been awful; what danger you were in. I cannot bear to think of it," said Helen, impetuously.

"Can you not?" looking at her keenly. "I must say, Miss Brown, that it is awfully good of you to take such an interest in a perfect stranger."

Helen coloured to the very eyes, and a hasty answer was on the tip of her tongue; but ere it had found words, he paused in the pathway, and said, "Forgive me! I had no right to say that. I would have gone into the fire ten times to hear what you said just now; it makes me hope that, perhaps, in spite of all, you will forgive me yet!"

"Why should you set such store by my forgiveness," said Helen, with trembling lips and her eyes on the ground. "Why should you talk such nonsense when you know you have never even thought it worth while to ask me to let bygones be bygones, nor show any wish to renew our—our—acquaintance?"

"Call it that, if you will; it will do as well as anything else," he answered; "but the reason I have not been to see you, nor written to you, nor spoken is simply that I feared that I had offended past all forgiveness—that the very sight of me must have brought hateful recollections to your mind; that you would think me a mean-spirited craven, who deserted and disowned and disbelieved you in your days of trouble, and would gladly come and be friends once you had come out into the sun of prosperity. You may forgive me, but it is more than I dare to hope; but one thing is positively certain, I shall never forgive myself. Helen, I am going abroad to-morrow; I must be away for months. You don't know how different I should feel going away if—"

"Helen and Rupert!" cried a voice, in a high key of amazement; and, in another second, Miss Blanche Despard appeared from a side-walk standing before them, disgusted incredulity written in plain letters over every feature of her pale, little, spiteful face.

"Helen, I have been looking for you everywhere. Lady Frances wants you at once to sing; and, Rupert, mother wishes to speak to you particularly. She is sitting on one of the green seats at the end of this walk. It was she who told me where to find you. Come along, Helen, they are waiting for you."

So saying Miss Despard promptly carried off her cousin, and left Sir Rupert standing in the middle of the path alone, cursing his unlucky fate, and muttering many anathemas under his dark moustache.

Needless to say that his aunt's anxiety for an interview was merely a ruse to detach him from his too dangerous companion.

After a few commonplace had been exchanged between him and his elderly relative he shook himself, so to speak, free, and made his way resolutely into the house, and edged, and steered, and manœuvred a passage into the music-room, but everybody, like himself, seemed eager "to hear Miss Brown sing."

There was no debarring her from the piano, no hiding her light under a bushel now. No; those clear, full, sweet notes rang out in the ears of the most fashionable audience in London. Her light no longer was hidden.

She sang "My dearest heart," and there was a thrill of subdued emotion in her notes; that reached the heart of the most careless listener.

In such a case it can be readily imagined how it found an echo in the heart of Sir Rupert, who, with his arms folded across his breast, leant against a wall with his eyes fastened on the face of the fair performer.

As the last bars of the song died away, and she stooped forward to take up her gloves, their eyes met for one single instant—not in an inadvertent little "look across the crowd"—met and exchanged a glance—a glance that was far more to Helen than the loud thunder

of applause which, after a second's hushed silence, followed the conclusion of her song.

On her way to the carriage Sir Rupert accosted her once more. It was only for a hasty, hurried moment; for Mrs. Despard was, as it were, driving her niece and daughter before her, anxious to be among the first departures.

"You are staying in Cadogan-crescent," he said, "are you not?"

"Yes, just for two or three days, whilst Mr. and Mrs. Towers have gone down to the country to see some old friends."

"Then"—lowering his voice—"may I write to you?"—(low as he spoke his whisper was audible to Blanche's sharp ears)—"and if I do will you send me one line, even one word, to speed me on my journey with a lighter heart?"

"Here is the carriage. Come, girls," said Mrs. Despard, impatiently; "I suppose we shall hardly see you again, Rupert? Get in, Blanche—get in, Helen," impatiently.

There was no time for further conversation—nor for any other answer than Helen implied by her giving Sir Rupert her hand—her hand and a smile. In another second the fretting boys had plunged away from the porch, and the lovers were parted. Ah! they little guessed for how long.

CHAPTER XXXII.

ALL the way home Helen was thinking of her letter. What would be the burden of it? What would he say?

Her meeting with her *ci-devant* lover that afternoon had aroused all her latent feelings—her love for him had stepped to the front, and thrust pride, indignation, and jealousy entirely out of sight.

What was it there was about him so different to other men? Why did her heart beat tumultuously at the sound of his voice, her colour come and go beneath his gaze?

He was sorry, very sorry, that he had misjudged her. Yes, she could see it in his face. He loved her as well as ever, she was certain. He would come back to her from South America—come back to her, and all would be well with them yet!

Yes, but she never reckoned on her evil genius who was sitting opposite to her on the back seat of the carriage, her hands tightly locked in her lap, her eyes closed in feigned fatigue, her face set and rigid—her evil genius, who was busily spinning plan after plan of dire purport in the recesses of her calculating, cruel mind.

Helen was anxious to be alone with her thoughts. It was dreadfully uphill work talking to her aunt and sustaining a fair share of conversation when her mind was full of a totally different subject than the various smart dresses which had been displayed on Lady Frances's lawn.

It was half-past seven when they reached home, and Helen hastened up to her own room, removed her bonnet and gloves, and sat down in the window to look her new-found happiness straight in the face. The letter would come by the early post next morning. Yes, of that she was confident. The post came round at half-past seven. In twelve hours more she would hold it in her hands; but how was she to send the answer—for answer it must have?

Dinner was postponed till half-past eight, and for a whole hour Helen sat in the twilight, dreaming day-dreams, and building many fair castles in the air. Castles in the air, indeed! Already her cousin (the wicked fairy) had reduced her fair building to the dust.

Blanche knew Rupert's ways from long experience. She knew that if he wrote he would send his missive by hand; so all dinner-time her ears were strained, her mind on the *quiver* to hear the hall-door bell, dreading it unspeakably—dreading to see the fatal letter appearing on a salver; but it did not come. The meal was safely tided over, and Helen

little knew that with the conclusion of the repast her hopes were over too. It had been a mere question of moments—a matter of ten minutes' delay; and yet that little ten minutes was the cause of a heavy heart, and of many bitter, unavailing tears.

Sir Rupert had hurried back to town, intending to write and despatch his letter at once, but on the way he was accosted by a friend who kept him for fully ten minutes to listen to a grievance—a fatal delay.

Ten minutes after the ladies had left the dining-room there came a smart pull at the bell, and Blanche, who had been lingering on the stairs, received a note in a square grey envelope, addressed in a well-known handwriting to Miss Brown; "the messenger was to wait for an answer," said the footman, as he placed it in Miss Despard's eager grasp.

"Very well; later I will give it to Miss Brown, and will let you know if there is any reply," she returned, ascending the stairs, and going into the drawing-room for appearances' sake.

She glanced with a half-guilty look at Helen, whose lovely head was bent low over some knitting, near a shady reading lamp. How pretty she looked, even Blanche grudgingly confessed to herself! and how little she knew what Blanche had in her pocket! After allowing a reasonable delay of about twenty minutes, Miss Despard again descended to the hall and desired the footman to tell Sir Rupert's messenger "that Miss Brown had received the note, but that there was no answer."

Poor Helen could hardly sleep all night for thinking of the happiness that was to come to her the next morning; and early—as early as the first milk-cart—she rose, and wrapping herself in her dressing gown, sat down at her window to watch for the post. How long it appeared—how very, very long—before his well-known blue and red uniform came into view, and his loud rap-rap was heard across the street. "One door, two doors, now the corner house," said Helen to herself with feverish excitement; "now he is coming here." Yes, he was coming across the road sorting a packet in his hand.

"Rap-rap!" How her heart jumped! Her letter had come of course, but how was she to get it? She could not, would not, wait a whole hour till breakfast-time; she would ring for Valérie, her maid. Yes, happy thought, hurrying to the bell.

Valérie was amazed to see her young mistress up and about so early—standing in the middle of the room with rosy cheeks and sparkling eyes, and all eagerness for the morning letters. Valérie descended sedately, and sedately returned, bearing in her hand two epistles. One glance was enough.

Neither of them was the letter, and Helen's hopes fell to zero. She felt almost ready to burst into tears, as she turned over, with shaking fingers, a receipt from a bookseller; and the programme of a concert for charitable purposes.

She felt as if life was very hard to bear this sunny July morning; but "hope springs eternal in the human breast." And by the time she had swallowed a cup of tea, which Valérie had procured as a kind of reward for her mistress's early rising, she had begun to turn her thoughts, with fond expectation, to the eleven o'clock post. And stimulated by hope—by the certain conviction that it must come then—she struggled to dress, and to take an interest in life once more.

Deluded girl! your letter is lying in the under-drawer of Blanche's dressing-case, at this identical moment; and Blanche, who is not troubled with such a thing as a conscience, is reposing comfortably among her pillows—sleeping the sleep of the just.

It is hardly necessary to tell of Helen's disappointment as the eleven o'clock post went by, and never even knocked at No. 7, Cadogan-crescent. Yet hope is hard to quench; and, raming one excuse after another, she stayed

indoors all day—hoping against hope—believing that her promised letter had been delayed in some unaccountable manner—but that, though late, it would arrive yet!

Days followed one another. What long, blank, empty days! and still no letter! The *Chimborazo*, in which Sir Rupert had sailed, had now been a fortnight at sea, so it was fully time for Helen to put away her withered, dead hopes, and to bury them decently.

Blanche had seen the struggle—the anguish in her cousin's mind—had seen, with inward triumph, her spasmodic attempts at cheerfulness—her eager eyes, when letters were brought in—her face of white, bitter disappointment. Yes, so far so good!

Rupert was out of the way for the next six months, and by the time he came back Helen would be married. Yes, married to Tavy Desborough. She could never make a stand against her aunt, Lady Leesborough, and Mrs. Towers—not to mention Tavy himself.

"You and Rupert seemed to have made it up again, that day at Lady Frances's?" she observed to Helen, a day or two after her cousin's departure. "I saw him chatting away with you quite amiably, but that was because his young lady was not there!"

"I don't believe he has any special young lady, as you call it!" replied Helen, boldly.

"Oh! but he has! If he denied it, you must not mind him; it's a little way that men have! I have known a man who declared that he hardly knew a girl—and actually married her within the week! Men hate people to know that they are engaged; they think that it spoils their fun!"

(To be continued.)

FAMILY ALTERCATIONS.—The best-intentioned wedded pair cannot live together without having some slight misunderstandings and mild disputes. They must talk when daily in each other's society, and they could not at all times, either on private or public affairs, agree on every point of argument, and, though these disagreements are very painful at the time, they are, we may say, necessities, as otherwise the man and wife would merely be a stupid and opinionless pair. True, there may no word be spoken harbouring a personal insult, but the unpleasantness is there nevertheless, and it cannot truthfully be denied. To defy these harmless altercations in wedded life one of the two must necessarily be a sort of dummy, with machinery by which he can be wound up to smile, weep, look grave, surprised, shocked, sympathetic, or loving, and by which he could be made to utter "Yes, dear," "No, darling," and other desired remarks at the other's will. Who shall be the inventor of this sort of clockwork, and who shall be the one to submit to the ordeal? We shall not attempt to draw a picture of the model wife, as men would wish her to be. We don't believe they could draw it themselves to their own satisfaction. However, we will vouch for it that all sensible women, and most all the others, would prefer a husband who now and then upset two or three chairs, then threw the bootjack through the middle pane of the window—that is, providing he had no trouble to keep his own balance—to that most detested of all creatures, the man who is as silent as the gods of India, and who sits hour after hour trying to ape a long-faced and sorely persecuted orang-outang. His picture first provokes merriment, then anger and disgust. His wife is the most pitiable creature in the world. Fire, flood, an earthquake or even a hurricane, might be welcome guests—but a man in a fit of sulks, never! Wake him up! As well might you try to revive a mummy, while his fit lasts. He is as rigid and dead to sensibility as the tenants of an Egyptian catacomb, and his stubbornness, as his wife knows, beggars all description. The spouse of a henpecked husband heartily regrets the nature of her mission.

YOU KISSED ME.

You kissed me! My head dropped low on your breast,
With a feeling of shelter and infinite rest;
While the holy emotions my tongue dare not speak
Flashed up in a flame from my heart to my cheek.
Your arms held me fast—oh, your arms were so bold!
Heart beat against heart in your passionate fold.
Your glances seemed drawing my soul through my eyes,
As the sun draws the mist from the seas to the skies.
Your lips clung to mine, till I prayed in my bliss,
They might never unclasp from the rapturous kiss.

You kissed me! My heart and my breath and my will,
In delicious joy, for a moment stood still,
Life had for me then no temptation, no charms,
No vision of happiness outside your arms.
And were I this instant an angel, possessed
Of the peace and the joy that are given the blest,
I would fling my white robe unrepentingly down,
I would tear from my forehead its beautiful crown,
To nestle once more in that haven of rest;
Your lips upon mine, and my head on your breast.

You kissed me! My soul, in a bliss so divine,
Reeled and swooned like a drunken man foolish with wine;
And I thought 'twere delicious to die there, if death
Would come while my lips were yet moist with your breath;
If my pulses would stop, if my heart might grow cold
While your arms clasped me round in their passionate fold.
And these are the questions I ask day and night:
Must my lips taste no more such exquisite delight?
Would you care if your breast were my shelter as then?
And if you were here—would you kiss me again?

J. H. H.

BROWN AS A BERRY.

CHAPTER XVII.

PERHAPS it is the keenest disappointment that Captain Carew has ever experienced to be obliged to acknowledge that the girl he has lately grown to love is not so pure and unapproachable as he had thought her.

If his life has had less of pleasure than that of most men, so also has it had less sorrow; for surely love is the parent of pain, and if we could live without the one, we might avoid the other. He feels no anger, no jealousy, only grief that she should so have lowered herself as to permit the familiarities of a man so little to be trusted or liked as Spencer Blythe.

Some men might have looked upon it as a trifling indiscretion, and excused it on the score of youth; but to him a woman is a being so set apart, that he cannot believe anyone would dare to offend her maiden pride without direct invitation so to do.

He has no plan of giving up the friendship that was so sweet; he is only resolved that now, come what may, he will never take her to be his wife; and because he cannot adapt himself to these altered circumstances and

thoughts, he keeps away from her all that next day, and will not even look in her direction.

Berry is first bewildered and then indignant at his altered mien. She has no suspicion that he can have a cause for it, unless he thinks it unladylike of her to have betted with him and accepted his gift; but if it is that, why did he ask her to do the one, and insist upon her doing the other?

Another fancy is more bitter still to bear, and yet it gives her a certain strength which she might have otherwise have lacked. What if he has repented the hasty words he spoke the day before, and wishes to show that he meant nothing by them?

At this idea all Berry's pride rises up in arms, and she can scarce contain her anger. Captain Carew wonders a little at the flashing eyes and compressed lips which meet his gaze when once by accident he passes her on the stairs. Is it possible, she thinks, that it is he who is somehow to blame; and how is it that Mr. Blythe never approaches her once?

He might have thought that he had been mistaken in what he had seen and heard, and he would almost have welcomed the loss of sight and hearing that would have restored her to him true and sweet as of old; but on the next day, Berry, loth above all things to seem to be wearing the willow for his sake, listens to Mr. Blythe's plea for pardon, and, on promise of amendment, again receives him into favour.

After that the struggle is over, and he believes the worst.

Mrs. Sowerby's delight is unbounded. The possible future becomes so real to her at last that she can scarcely forbear calling Berry Lady Blythewood, and treating her with the respect that would be due to her in such a case.

"Some girls have such luck!" she one day says, enviously, to Mr. Le Sage; but his reply rather startles her.

"Do you mean little Berry Cardell? For my part, I think she is rather unfortunate to have attracted the attentions of Mr. Blythe. He is not a marrying man."

"Nonsense!" sharply. "Mr. Blythe's intentions are unmistakable."

"Mrs. Sowerby, did you ever hear the approved definition of the word 'flirtation'?" is the seemingly irrelevant reply.

"No."

"Attentions without intentions. I think that describes this case exactly."

"I am sure you are mistaken. He seems so very devoted," she answers, uneasily; but though she tries to reassure herself, she cannot feel so certain as before that all will come right. She had thought it all depended on Berry's will; but what if he is really only flirting and compromising her with his unmeaning attentions?

"I am glad our girls will not be grown up for some time," she says to her husband, with a sigh over her future responsibilities as *chaperone*.

"So am I," returns Captain Sowerby, deciding with some reason that his present expenses are sufficient drain upon his slender purse.

"I wish they had all been boys!" she says again, thinking of her own unsuccessful matrimonial venture, and of the pitfalls that generally surround her sex.

But to this remark Captain Sowerby wisely makes no reply.

Mr. Le Sage is not the only one who doubts the truth of Mr. Blythe's apparent devotion. Captain Carew has been eye-witness to too many of his flirtations to readily believe in him; and though it is true that this girl is, in his eyes at least, immeasurably superior to those others, still he knows that a man's nature is not readily changed, and this one is almost incorrigibly fickle.

One evening he is driven to openly interfere. Mr. Blythe has made some laughing remark about "the pretty little gipsy," and his tone is so insultingly familiar that Captain Carew can bear it no longer.

"If the lady you mean had a brother on board I think you would hesitate before speaking of her like that. As it is, if you offend again I shall take upon myself to resent the implied slight, which I am sure is equally distasteful to us all."

There is a murmur of assent in reply. There are only a few subalterns present, and though they had themselves hesitated to pull their senior over the coals, they are not averse to see it done by another. A general chorus begins of "quite right;" "too bad, Blythe;" "I agree with Carew," and so on, under cover of which the person attacked has time to recover from his surprise.

"I thought Sowerby stood in that happy position and envied him accordingly. Begad, I wish I had such a pretty sister!" with a half laugh.

"If Captain Sowerby had been here I should not need to have spoken."

"Not so sure of that. I believe the gentleman rather favours my pretensions. At least I know his wife does."

"You admit them to be pretensions. I thought you were not a marrying man?" says a subaltern, in some surprise.

"No more I am. And one thing is certain, I shall not marry a lady whose name I do not even know. Why, it wouldn't be legal! Fancy having to swear at the altar, 'I, Spencer, take thee, Captain Sowerby's charge, to have and to hold, &c., &c.'"

"Le Sage calls her Miss Scardale," replies the subaltern, rather nervously, Captain Carew's eyes being fixed sternly upon him.

But he has been drawn into the discussion and will not give it up.

The fact is, Berry, by some mistake, has been entered as Miss Sowerby, and Laurence Le Sage's affected pronunciation of her true name does not tend to clear up the error.

"I called her Miss Scardale and she asked me who I meant, and she also denies the patronage of Sowerby, so I don't see what else I can do. She won't let me call her Berry—yet."

"Berry would be quite sufficient for the exigencies of the marriage service," laughs the subaltern again.

"Ah, yes, I suppose it would; but I don't think it will ever come to that. Be comforted, Carew; the first attractive matron I meet after landing will effectually banish this pretty spinster from my mind, and you will have a clear field with my blessing."

But Captain Carew turns angrily on his heel and leaves the saloon without vouchsafing a reply. Such conversation would always jar upon his taste, but that Berry should be spoken of in terms like those galls him to the quick.

He cannot forget that he has loved her, and even in his thoughts, the past tense is so regretfully, tenderly uttered, that it seems as though it were the present still. He is half inclined to warn her, but knows how such warnings are inevitably received, and, besides, how could he deal such a blow to her pride?

How could she bear to hear what the whole ship will now soon know, that she is being trifled with and scorned? His heart softens wondrously to her; for, in spite of her coquetry and that scene which is as yet unexplained, she is a woman, and has no one to protect her. Once or twice during the day he addresses her and in the evening, as she stands at the saloon door swinging her hat to and fro in her hand, he comes up again.

"You are going on deck?" he begins, questioningly.

"I—I don't know."

"You are getting tired of the inevitable after-dinner migration?"

"Oh! so tired. I never thought that life at sea could be so wearisome, so—so hateful!"

He asks no questions, knowing even better than she what real reason she has for her distaste. And yet he is touched by her distress, and has resolved that come what may he will stand by her, and show that his

reverence for her is as high as though he had never loved her, and been deceived.

For sole reply he gently forces the shawl from her arm, and wraps it round her.

"The Southern Cross is visible to-night! Come and see it!" he says, persuasively.

And she complies.

Her whole manner is changed in a moment, and she regains some of that buoyancy which during the last few days she had lost. A new lightness is in her step as she runs up the companion-ladder, and a new brightness in her eyes.

When she is at last on deck, seated at the farthest end of the vessel, with Captain Carew at her side, wearing something of his old air of devotion, she so far recovers her natural spirits as to disagree with him.

"Four stars placed in opposite position, not all of them at equal distances. Captain Carew, I don't think much of your Cross; it is horribly rickety. Not even a Maltese one!" she says, saucily, in answer to his explanation where to look.

"I am sorry you are disappointed," he returns, gravely; "but we are not looking at it from its best vantage point. If we were over there, or there," with a comprehensive sweep of his arm in two different directions.

"Ah! then, of course, it would be a far more imposing sight. The sights we cannot see are *always* so imposing!" she interrupts him, with one of those merry ringing laughs that lately it strikes him now he has not heard.

There is something in the sound so alien to his suspicions that he cannot bring himself at the moment to believe in them.

The old glamour steals over him, and he edges closer to her side.

"For the sake of the finest sight in the world I would not be elsewhere than here!" he whispers, below his breath.

"No? And why not?"

The calm, questioning glance which she gives as she speaks somewhat discomposes him, and causes him to hesitate.

With a woman's quick reading of his thoughts she interrupts him again.

"You are like all Englishmen, I suppose, contemptuous of anything in the way of sight-seeing. Besides, none of this can be new to you!"

"I beg your pardon. One thing is very new!"

And this time she does not question him, and a silence ensues, only broken by the sound of the ship cutting through the waters, and the waves dashing against its sides.

Presently he breaks in impetuously,—

"Will you pardon me if I ask one question. I know I have no right to ask, but it has lain so heavily on my mind and your answer can give me such relief."

"Say on," she answers, turning toward him in evident surprise.

"The other night at Malta I was behind you when Mr. Blythe helped you from the boat. I saw him touch your shoulder and call you 'Pussy,' and—and—"

It is difficult to say all that this has meant to him, until he knows whether it was an unwarranted liberty or authorised caress of which he is speaking; and feeling this at once she answers, hastily,—

"Is that all? I am so glad you asked, and have so often wished to tell you!" And then in a few words she explains to him the whole affair, how her one indiscreet and childish act had been taken advantage of, and put her so much in the wrong that she had not been able to right herself since.

He listens with a certain sense of relief, and yet he had not been human, perhaps, if he had not felt a little disappointed, too, that she was not entirely blameless.

A man is so tenacious of the perfections of his lady-love, and he would have liked her to be beyond suspicion even.

Berry is utterly unconscious, and utterly happy. The estrangement of the last week is explained, and satisfactorily too. If he had not loved her, why should he have resented the

other man's impertinence, or cared to show displeasure at her conduct?

The little curved lips grow tremulous and shy; her eyes are downcast, so she does not see the half dubious expression in his face.

"You do not blame me now," she murmurs, confidently; knowing how little harm was meant.

"N—no," hesitatingly; and then impulsively he adds, "Will you answer me one more question?"

"Certainly!"

"It is not from idle impertinence I ask, but sincere wish to serve you. Tell me—do you really dislike Spencer Blythe?"

"Really, truly, heartily!" she answers decidedly.

"Then take my advice and show that you do. Not suddenly, nor pointedly, but unmistakably!"

She looks at him inquisitively. What can prompt this warning? Is it jealousy, or has something happened of which she knows nothing? A woman is so helpless, so powerless against the slander of the world, and she feels very keenly now that she has no one to stand between her and its censure.

"Will you promise?" he goes on, eagerly.

"Yes; I promise!" she repeats, slowly.

A sailor, with a lantern in his hand, passes them as she speaks, and throws the light upon her face. So white and pitiful it is now—so different from what he remembers it at first—all sparkling and radiant with youth and happiness, that he feels a twinge of compunction. What right had he to be the first to offer to her lips the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil? He ought rather to have taken her in his arms and silently sheltered her from all with his watchful love, without even letting her suspect that there had been a danger. He feels vexed with himself for the British cautiousness that is inherent in him, preventing him from risking his life's honour and happiness by placing them in her hands without further trial of her truth; but the old tradition of what a woman should be—how pure and high above the breath of suspicion—is too strong for him, and he turns away with a sigh, leaning his arms on the deck-side, and peering gloomily into the water.

Presently the sound of a gentle sobbing at his side effectually arouses him.

"Berry, my darling! what is it?" he exclaims aghast, all prudential resolves flying to the winds.

"Let me go! let me go! I am wretched!" she cries, the big tears rolling down her cheeks, and trying to disengage herself from his strong, detaining hand.

"Not until you have heard me—not until you know that I wish to make you my wife—that—that I love you, Berry!"

And then both are silent. He is startled and half overwhelmed by the force of what he has himself said. She is full of an intoxicating happiness that thrills through her in spite of all. Her quick instinct has told her that she has been spoken of lightly, either by or on account of Spencer Blythe, and that it is because of that her lover has hesitated to declare himself. She feels that the declaration has been wrung from him now by the foolish tears she could not restrain—that, in a more sober moment, he would not have spoken thus. She knows that he loves her; but she knows, too, that he wished to have placed her on probation, and resents the implied doubt. And yet her first feeling is intense joy.

"Berry, are you listening?" he asks, eagerly, impatient at her long silence. "Do you love me?—will you have me, Berry?"

"No!"

The word is harsh in its brief coldness and self-repression, and he gives a quick, incredulous glance into her eyes. But the white lids are lowered, and effectually cover them—only her lips, pressed tightly together, prove her determination.

He had never dreamed of this, and with a man's inconsequence, loves her the better that

she is not easily gained, never doubting, even yet, but that in the end he will prevail.

"Why not?" he whispers, gently, one arm stealing round her waist.

She disengages herself slowly, regretfully almost as it seems; but her words are as uncompromising as ever when she answers,—

"Because I never mean to marry at all—least of all would I marry a man who had doubted me and hesitated on the expediency of making me his wife."

"Berry!" he breaks in, reproachfully.

"It is true! Can you deny it?" she asks, stretching out her hands with something of an imploring gesture, as though yearning to be contradicted and proved wrong.

He is silent. How can he forswear himself even to gain what he knows now he would die to call his own? How mad he has been, and how blind! He can only cover his face and groan.

"Good-night, Captain Carew!"

"Berry, stay!"

"To what purpose? All has been said."

She is moving away, her head held high in the air with a new haughtiness and dignified pride; for has she not suddenly become a woman with a woman's sense of wrong done to her, and unconquerable sorrow?

He lays hold of her gown entreatingly, but the little chance he has of detaining her is destroyed by the advent of Lawrence Le Sage.

"Miss Cardell, I am commissioned to bring you to Mrs. Sowerby. She wishes to speak to you," he says.

He has been taken from an exciting game of cards, and is too angry and impatient to speak with his usual affectedness.

For the first time Berry's name is heard as it really is.

"Cardell!" echoes Captain Carew, blankly.

"Miss Cardell" is the assenting reply of the other, with an accent of reproach.

Captain Carew staggers as though struck by a sudden blow, and falling back, no longer endeavours to prevent Berry's departure.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WHAT there is in the name to so discompose him Captain Carew does not confide to anyone.

Perhaps he thinks it only a chance coincidence, or that a question might bring confirmation of what he dreads.

In any case, he is silent, and by-and-by, he and Berry by mutual tacit consent drift into their old relationship, for the time being friends and nothing more.

And as he does not urge his love, so she does not reject his friendship, letting things go on as they are, only feeling that she cannot bear to lose him altogether.

At times she feels indignant with herself for her tameness in thus accepting a half-worship and reluctant trust; but he is so humble and so reverential always that she cannot keep up the resentment, and the mere knowledge of his love gives such buoyancy to her spirits that each day her eyes grow brighter and her cheeks more glowing, and she is once again the same daring little gipsy that she was before her father's death occurred to sadden her.

Captain Carew is only biding his time, waiting for her wounded pride to heal, and to prove his penitence for the implied doubt.

That doubt he feels no longer—he would stake his all on their happiness if she would only forgive him now; seeing plainly at last that a childish indiscretion is by no means to be confounded with a woman's falsity, or even the lesser sin of unmaidenliness.

The surrender is an unconditional one, and if it has been slow in its acknowledgment it is all the more abject. She might put her tiny foot on his neck and take her revenge with the utmost cruelty were she so inclined, for he is too guilty in his own estimation to murmur at anything she might do. He loves her so dearly, so tenderly, that he would give much to retract what he had said, or, worse still, what was left too long unspoken. Will

she ever forgive that fatal hesitation which she could not but detect?

Mr. Blythe for once in his life is utterly nonplussed. By the light of none of his previous varied experiences can he account for the change in Berry's manner. A subtle coldness has crept in between them which, with all his vanity, he cannot attribute to pique, for his attentions are more constant than ever under the new stimulus of a rebuff; and, besides, it is such a gradual dismissal he receives that it has come before he exactly knows what has happened, or realizes how entirely he has failed.

If Berry had been the most determined title-hunter, the most artful coquette, she could not have adopted more potent means for riveting his chains; more than ever he is resolved to succeed, even though in conquering he might have to stoop to the concession of making her his wife! "Of course that is her game, little Pass!" he thinks to himself with a complacent chuckle; and after the manner of his kind likes her none the worse for the arts which are practised, as he thinks, for his subjugation only. That he could possibly be rejected, when his heart and hand are seriously offered, the Hon. Spencer Blythe has never been brought up to believe.

Mrs. Sowerby is not so hopeful. She has sense enough to see that Berry is not like some women ready to barter her soul for a title in prospect, and she has always feared the influence of Captain Carew, who from the first seems to have taken the girl's fancy. She can only wonder in amazement how anyone could hesitate between the two, and deplore that such a choice had never been offered her. Certainly she would not be as now, struggling on the miserable pittance that the Government allows, and trying to dress and live like a lady, while providing for the wants and necessities of her three little children.

"Impossible to live on a captain's pay!" someone had said once in her hearing.

"Not impossible, because we have done it ourselves, but oh!—" with an irrepressible shudder that speaks volumes of disgust, "very—very disagreeable."

And to something of a like fate she sees Berry hurrying now, and cannot refrain from a word of warning.

"Look at me!" she says, with dismal tragedy in conclusion, but Berry only laughs.

"Not a very pitiable case, after all, with three dear little children, and loving your husband, as I suppose you do."

"Of course!" meekly; "but still we are terribly, miserably poor."

"Something is sure to turn up!" is the reply given, with that wonderful hopefulness of youth which knows no fear and acknowledges no doubt.

"My dear, don't depend on that. Don't marry Captain Carew with the idea—"

"I am not going to marry at all!" interrupts Berry, sharply; and with the words still quivering, on her lips goes on deck to where Captain Carew is waiting to put his fate to the test.

With a woman's quick instinct she guesses his intention and has decided on her reply before he has spoken.

It is their last day on board ship together. To-morrow they reach Bombay, and he has had, as she knows, urgent commands to join his regiment at once. To reject him altogether she has not the heart, although, of course, it would be the most dignified course to pursue; but surely she might compromise the matter, and impose on him the probation he had meant to have imposed on her. There is a sort of rigid justice in this determination that pleases the girl and partly satisfies her pride. A little half smile of amusement hovers round her mouth as she listens to his suit, that discomposes the young man sadly, and makes him hopeless as to his success.

"Berry, will you marry me?" he says desperately at last.

She turns away her head, shaking it at the same time.

"You do not love me!"

"I did not say that, Captain Carew," with a mischievous sidelong glance, feeling that now at least the game is in her own hands.

Then you do not trust me? Is that it?" he questions, eagerly.

"Did you trust me?"

"I know I was foolishly, utterly to blame, but Berry, can't you forgive me for it now?"

"I have forgiven you long ago," hesitatingly.

"But not forgotten!" he adds, reading her thoughts aright.

"No, not forgotten. How could I?"

"If you loved me—" he begins.

"Ah! yes, then perhaps," with another mischievous glance, that tells him the case is not so hopeless as he had supposed.

"Child, how can you be so cruel? Put me to any test you like, to any trial, only come to me at last and I shall be content!" he breaks in earnestly, and something rising in her throat warns her that she must trifle with him no more if she wishes to keep the supremacy she has gained, for tears coming at this juncture would be a terrible self-betrayal.

"Would you like to know my sister?" she questions somewhat irrelevantly, as it seems to him.

His face falls and darkens a little, the old fear coming over him again. What if he should know her already, and that knowledge should stand between him and his present love?

"Your sister?" he echoes, uncomfortably.

"Yes, Mrs. Chester. If you care to make her acquaintance and would like to visit her when I am there—we—we—we shall be very glad to see you!"

"You mean I may go to you and plead my cause again?" he asks, with a short gasp of surprised delight.

"If you like!" demurely.

"If I like!" with a happy contempt for the weakness of the words. "My darling, nothing could keep me away now; after the hope you have given me at last."

She raises her head with a smile that is meant to be a saucy disclaimer of so much meaning being inferred from the concession she has made; but somehow the smile dies away in a tremulous quiver, and the bright eyes grow dim with tears as she meets his passionate gaze. Her head droops again, but not until he has read all the tell-tale blushes have written over brow and throat. No longer has he any fear; and had the place been less public he might have completed his triumph by extorting an unwilling confession even now from the ripe and yielding lips, kissing the dew away from the thick eyelashes as they rest darkly on her soft, crimson cheeks. But for the time he must be content.

"I will win you yet," he whispers, exultantly; and Berry gives an excited little sigh, knowing well that, in spite of her brave defence, she is already won.

Mr. Blythe from a distance notes all this, and prepares to collect his scattered forces. He has no doubt about the matter under discussion, and he is keen enough to detect that no decisive answer has been given. It only rests with him now to go, see, and conquer, utterly routing the audacious enemy who has presumed to rivalry.

So it happens that to Berry comes that day which it has been credibly asserted comes to no maiden out of a novel—unless an exception is to be made for the life on board ship, where events are necessarily more crowded and contracted—she receives two offers of marriage on the same day and within the same hour!

But this second proposal, instead of softening her heart hardens it; and if there is a flush now upon her face it is from wounded pride that her consent could be so evidently taken for granted.

"You think I am only trifling?" he says, incautiously, noting her displeasure and not accounting for it aright.

"Indeed, no! I do not insult myself, nor you!" is her quick reply.

"I assure you I am seriously in love, and

honestly wish to make you my wife;" with a slight pomposity that is engendered by the knowledge of the solemnity of these unusual circumstances.

Love he has often professed and sued for in return, but this marriage is such a different thing. The mere mention of it almost damps his ardour.

"You are very good!"

"Not at all! I—I can't help it!" ruefully.

The girl laughs aloud. His distress is so evident at having been forced into this extreme measure, and she guesses some of his thoughts.

He feels he is not doing justice to his noted powers of persuasion—not, as usual, carrying things off with a high hand.

"But, then," he says to himself, with a heavy, audible sigh that could not fail to injure his cause, "there are very few fellows who could extract amusement from their own funerals!"

In any case, what has he to gain? On one hand he loses his bachelor freedom, and at the same time binds himself to love one woman only (which on the face of it is absurd, especially as this one is not a real beauty—not a woman of the world—nor, in fact, anything like what he has hitherto exclusively admired). On the other hand, should he be rejected, his prestige is gone for ever; for that any woman should keep the triumph of his rejection a secret is more than he can credit.

Only one comfort he has that women proverbially exaggerate so on these subjects that there is just the chance that she might not be believed. In such a case, if such a case be possible, he must put a bold face on it, and make the best of his mistake.

She is laughing still; when, raising his eyes from where they have been moodily fixed on the scrupulously clean boards at his feet, he looks to her for some encouragement.

"Poor Mr. Blythe! Does it hurt you much?" she asks, in a tone of mock sympathy, pursing up her pretty lips into a pout.

"W—w—what?" he questions, blankly.

"This ardent devotion you are professing, this love you cannot help, and which has led you into so serious a strait!"

"It is scarcely a subject for jest, I think!" he interrupts her, stiffly.

"Indeed, I hope it is! I do not wish to think it earnest!" gravely.

He is silent for a moment, looking her full in the face, and striving to guess at her real feelings.

What he sees does not reassure him, but he is grateful for the tact with which she strives to spare him the discomfort of a more plainly-worded rejection.

"You mean what you say?" pointedly.

"Yes, I mean what I say! You know women sometimes do!" archly.

"I—I wish you didn't now!" he answers, bluntly.

But she only smiles, and extends her hand with a little frankly, friendly gesture that disarms him quite, and makes him wish more than ever that he could have gained her love.

She is such a child, with only a quaint, gipsy-like prettiness (no beauty) to recommend her.

That she should have the courage—to him it almost seems *effrontery*—to refuse his offer, passes his comprehension altogether.

He can only look vaguely about him and wonder if this is, indeed, the same world he has lived in till now, with all of whose tenets he had thought himself to have been thoroughly familiar.

Mrs. Sowerby, too, divining what has passed, shares something of his surprise. Although she had partly suspected what would be the end, she cannot even now quite realize that any girl could be so blind to her own interests. She will repent it, of course, *ceteris paribus*, but the repentance will come too late, and those brilliant prospects she has now so recklessly thrown away will have vanished hopelessly into the waste land of memory—that mirage of those who are stranded in the deserts

of despair, and wishing for no future, can only peer yearningly into the pleasures of the past.

Early next morning they steam into Bombay, and in the afternoon Captain and Mrs. Sowerby, with Berry, transfer themselves and luggage into the tender that is to take them to the station for Deolalee, their first destination.

The two men standing on the deck of the *Arcturus* are watching the distance widen between the two ships with strangely different emotions.

Spencer Blythe is full of a vague, dreamy regret for he scarce knows what; but Captain Carew is only conscious then of a great passionate hope at his heart for the possibilities the future holds in store.

CHAPTER XIX.

WHEN Mrs. Chester had telegraphed to her sister so urgently to come it had been without either her husband's knowledge, or his sanction. Not that perhaps he would have refused point-blank to receive the girl under his roof, homeless as she is, but that he would have gladly welcomed any loophole of escape from this offer of hospitality.

He is not naturally either free-hearted or open-hearted, and setting aside this, his relations with his wife of late, have not been of that kind to make his wish for the presence of any third party in their home, least of all Berry, who, with her keen insight, is certain to detect their want of household harmony, and probably comment upon it with her usual impetuosity of speech.

That Eve, in his temporary absence, should have ventured thus to invite her without reference to his wishes or authority gives him good ground of complaint, and at first he positively refuses to go down to Lucknow, where the Sowerby's journey comes so an end, and bring her up to the hill station, where they themselves are staying during the summer months.

Eve does not press the point; but as the time approaches, speaks casually of going in his stead, which threat, as she knows, will speedily bring him to his senses, and partially thrown-off allegiance to her rule.

He is inordinately jealous of his lovely wife, the more so as she has never professed any affection for himself, and he cannot think it likely that she will remain always so cold and untouched as she seems now.

Under this ever-present fear he grows more morose and self-contained each day, and a greater object of terror to his hapless subordinates, who cannot believe that most of his sternness is in reality abstractedness, and that they, even when under rebuke, are scarcely in his thoughts.

His departure to the hills is hailed with delight by all, even the soldiers, who are only too delighted to serve under the milder rule of Major Lennox, he being as yet still with the regiment.

Lady Blanche brings her two babies, aged respectively two and one, up to Ram Tol for the hot season, and Mrs. Lee-Brooke soon follows with her little girl.

Mrs. Haller declares that she will "never desert Mr. Micawber," or rather, in her own words, that nothing shall induce her to merit the odious term, *grass widow*.

Mrs. Payne stays below, it is reported, for the sole purpose of contesting the right of seniority with the doctor's wife; others say that she has some wonderful girlish costumes only suited for the hottest weather, and that it is on their account she remains.

But all this is only conjecture, of course, and in any case she is not much missed, for the station rapidly becomes as gay as only an Indian hill station can, where the friends, who are present, take the place of those that are absent; and society has carried on in that free-and-easy manner which gives rise to so much scandal, and perhaps a little injustice.

A lady, whom circumstances have unhappily deprived of her legal lord and master for

so many months or weeks, is naturally an object of compassion to the other sex; and if such small attentions; as are offered and accepted—in some cases innocently enough—are misconstrued, perhaps a little of the blame lies at the doors of those who are the first to accuse and condemn.

It might almost be questioned whether a palace of truth would not be more fatal to the gossips, with which society is plagued, than to those whom they so remorselessly strive to put without the pale.

Mrs. Lee-Brooke is very loud in condemnation of the practices which have become, alas! almost universal. Not only is it shocking to her morals, but galling, too, to her vanity to see others that she, at least, deems far less attractive than herself so obviously preferred and chosen to be marks for scandal, while she is, by common consent, kept out in the cold of irreproachable immaculateness.

If by ill-fortune one lady is left a wallflower, or forgotten in some project for amusement, it is always she, and very puzzled is she sometimes to account for the same. No one gives more dinner-parties and luncheons, no one is more careful that the right persons shall be asked to meet each other, however she may deplore the miserable state into which society has sunk that such meetings should be ignored—even condoned; and yet laugh, talk and strive as she will, and popular as she always is among the women, by the men she is notwithstanding still neglected; even avoided, at least by all but the oldest of fogies, or youngest of subalterns.

It is strange how men prefer the ugliest women to those whose chief propensity is gossip, and whose sole aim in life is to please; but certainly popularity is most difficult to gain, of all the things which ambition desires, and, what is worse, a failure in an evident attempt heaps more contumely on the unfortunate failer's head than is worth the risk to win.

Eve Chester, in spite of her listlessness and indifference, or perhaps because of it, pleases without an effort, and is soon acknowledged "Queen of Beauty"—the leader in every gaiety that is proposed and promoted.

Whether she is really happy at this time it is most difficult to say.

The change from poverty to such luxury, as is hers now, must necessarily be a great and a pleasant one, with the sole drawback—only Heaven knows, and her own heart, how huge a one it is—that all is owed to, and shared with, her husband.

His gloomy nature and suspicious jealous passion repels her more each day. Even her love for her little child is half smothered by the thought that it is his, too. Without love she could have lived and been tolerably content, for hers has always been an undemonstrative disposition; but this fierce and unwelcome tenderness that is forced upon her by fits and starts chafes her, and makes her desperate at times—utterly careless of what the world says, or where her own folly may lead her at the last.

It is March when Berry arrives. She has stayed for some little time at Lucknow with the Sowerbys; but the confinement is so trying to her high spirits and healthy activity that she is only too glad to continue her journey, hot as the weather is, for any exertion.

The deadly quietness of the bungalow only relieved, or rather made worse, by the monotonous sound of the moving punkahs or the fretful wailings of the children, on whom the climate has already taken bad effect, is so unlike the dreamy sybaritic life that she had pictured to herself. Surely the hills must be an improvement on this!

She meets Colonel Chester with a certain new dignity and self-repression that impresses him, and makes him augur better for the pleasantness of their relations.

She is a woman now, no longer the *enfant terrible* whom he had dreaded and disliked; and though she will, perhaps, never attain to that degree of falseness which is well-nigh

indispensable to good breeding, still her manner has undoubtedly gained in softness, and, he cannot but admit, the added charm.

He is so careful for her comfort and solicitous for her welfare during their journey, that a great deal of her prejudice against him, too, insensibly vanishes.

It is evening when they start, but only the gathering darkness tells that the sun has set; the air is as hot and breathless as in full mid-day. The mosquitos buzz in swarms under the shady trees, and the fever-bird is croaking his shrill cry with hideous monotony, while in the distance can be heard the barking of the jackals, as they wander about in packs, seeking for their prey. Altogether the night is so cheerless and unlovely that she feels no regret in leaving—only a pleasant excitement at the unusual mode of travelling.

The carriage, which is drawn by three ponies, is tolerably comfortable—flat, like a couch inside, and fitted with rugs and cushions, so that presently, soothed by the rapid, forward motion, Berry falls asleep, and does not arouse again at any of their frequent stoppages until the final halting place is reached.

Then Colonel Chester comes to the door of her carriage from his own, and rallies her on her somnolency. It is early morning, and they are at the foot of the hills. A fresh, cold breeze is blowing, and as the girl jumps out wide-awake at once, she pushes her hair from her forehead, and turns eagerly towards it.

"It is like a new life!" she says, with a gasp of relief; and does not know the full truth of her own words.

Only those can guess what the hill air means who have spent the hot months below in delicate health, or who have seen the once strong men, and healthy children in the last stage of lassitude and debility, brought up, hoping against hope, fearing the worst. To them, indeed, it is a new life, like the breath that was breathed into the nostrils of man at the beginning of the world.

Looking at her then, as she stands with flushed cheeks and parted lips, Colonel Chester sees in her—for the first time—a resemblance to his wife.

It is Eve's mouth without the cold expression, which mars its beauty—the same haughtily turned head and slight figure, both nearly of the same height.

"How like you are to Eve!" he exclaims, involuntarily, with a smile half humorous, half wistful; his voice softening, as it invariably does, when mentioning his wife's name; and then, without waiting for any reply, he turns sharply and enters the Dak bungalow.

Berry, liking him none the less for the emotion he has shown, follows him slowly, and ignoring the remark expresses her amusement at her first experience of the accommodation afforded by Government to its travelling servants.

Anything less like luxury was never seen, even in the homeliest country inn, for there, at least, they would afford you bed and bedding, and the more modest requirements of the toilet; but here there is nothing but a table, a few chairs, and a couple of bedsteads, guilty of covering and looking uncompromisingly hard and uncomfortable. Moreover, the hospitality is limited, and after twenty-four hours' sojourn the hapless traveller is compelled to make room for a newer comer and proceed on his way, not always rejoicing.

Colonel Chester does not wait for this contingency. His own hill pony—a sure-footed little animal, that is accustomed to travel over the roughest and most uneven ground with absolute self-confidence and safety—has met him there, and he orders it to be brought round directly their hastily-prepared morning meal is finished, and another without difficulty is procured for Berry. She laughs merrily, as he ties a shawl round her short skirts, after the primitive fashion often adopted in the hills for convenience; and, on the whole, enjoys it all hugely. Everything is so new and strange to her, and she proves

such an energetic traveller, that the three days' journey is compassed in two.

The girl looks around her in silent admiration, when at last the Colonel announces they are in Ram Tol. It is a glorious day, and the scent of the pine trees in which the place abounds, is wafted towards her in a grateful freshness, notwithstanding that the sun is high still in the heavens. Below in the valleys the rhododendron trees are in a full blaze of crimson blossom, and in the distance the snowy range of the Himalayas stand out magnificently white against the deep-blue sky. The lesser hills nestle around a lake, which looks deliciously cool after the barren heat of the plains, and forms the centre of the small station; while everywhere about are dotted bungalows, seemingly almost inaccessible, on account of the narrow paths leading to them.

"In which of those nests have you hidden, Eve?" asks Berry, gaily, as once more they start on their road; and involuntarily her old thoughts of Colonel Chester, in his suspected character of Bluebeard, flash across her mind.

"We live farther out, but it will not be long before we arrive now," he answers, reassuringly, thinking she must be tired from the journey. "You are a capital traveller. I don't fancy Eve would expect us till to-morrow."

"It will be nice to surprise her," says Berry, gaily, and does not think whether it would be also wise or safe.

A large garden, or compound as it is called, surrounds the bungalow, and as they ride quickly on beneath the trees, Berry grows more and more excited at the prospect of the meeting.

Colonel Chester calls for someone to take the ponies when they reach the verandah, and dismounting hastily, lifts her off. Leaving her to follow, he strides on through several handsomely furnished rooms all leading one into the other, until he halts before a striped hanging curtain of oriental colours. This he lifts and motions the girl to enter first.

It is Eve's own room, and Eve, in a cool grey muslin gown, with soft white lace about her throat and arms, is seated in a low lounging chair, tea-cup in hand, while on a foot-stool at her feet is Ronald May, with the old look of devotion in his eyes, all the bitterness of his anger apparently banished for ever.

Even in the moment of their first meeting—Berry remembering all and knowing so much of what has passed—cannot resist a backward glance at the man, who, for better or worse, is her sister's husband.

At the first glance, he appears unmoved by any other emotion save a natural joy at meeting his beautiful wife again; but as he meets Berry's gaze, so evidently distressed and disturbed, his own countenance lowers, and a quick gleam of suspicion leaps into his dark eyes.

The next moment, Ronald May is on his feet, and greeting his Colonel with a somewhat embarrassed effusion; while the faces of the two sisters are hidden in a close embrace.

(To be continued.)

WINNING THE YOUNG.—It is not sufficient that we introduce the young into an atmosphere of virtue, so called. It must be also bright and clear with happiness and energy, if it is to win young hearts. Where religion is made gloomy, virtue melancholy, and all duty tinged with the sombre hue of self-restraint, it is certain that young and joyous natures will shrink from them. Such religion is not religious; such virtue is not virtuous; it rather shows itself to be the enemy of true goodness by driving away by its repellent aspect those who might embrace it. Happiness is the twin-sister of right doing. To preserve their union with sacred care is the highest office of philanthropy; to divorce them is the surest road to degradation and ruin.

THE LILY AND THE ROSE.

—o— CHAPTER XVI.

PHILIP GRANVILLE stayed whispering at Greta's window for a full hour, holding on to the woodwork with one hand, whilst the other was passed round the girl's slender neck, so that the red lips were close to his, and he could make up for his long fast by banqueting richly now on their sweets.

The moon had gone round to the other side of the house, where Lady Avanley slept peacefully, and left them in darkness, so that if anyone had passed by, (and who should be in the grounds at this hour of the night?) they would have taken Philip for one of the shadows.

Greta had extinguished her lamp. She did not care to see Philip's face, she only wanted to feel him near her—to hear his dear voice—to gather strength from his strength; but she did not need to see him to know that his eyes were full of the love his lips were not eloquent enough to express, for she felt it in every fibre of her being—in every pulse of her heart.

"I ought to go now," he had said twenty times at least, and still the close pressure of her white arms made him linger; at last he unloosed them ever so gently.

"Greta, darling, I must go now," he whispered. "It is not for myself I speak, for if I had my own way I would stay here the livelong night, but we might be surprised at any moment."

"Would that matter now?" she asked. "More than ever, darling, for it would frustrate all our plans."

"Then you must go, Philip; I—I couldn't bear that!"

"Nor I; and for that reason I would rather be too prudent than not prudent enough."

"Of course; I know you are right," she said, and kissed him and let him go.

Philip lingered in the grounds for awhile, out of sight, watching the light in her window, until it went out suddenly, and he could picture her laying her beautiful head down on the pillow with a last prayer for him on her lips, and then he turned homewards.

The nearest way to the Rectory was across the park, and as he had Sir Charles's permission to make use of the short cut, he entered at the little swing-gate where he and Alice had once been surprised by Cox. This led him, of necessity, past the Haunted Elm; and though he knew now that the apparition he had once seen was not to be accounted for so easily as he had supposed, his mind was so preoccupied he did not even think of Lady Greta's ghost until he was within a few yards of the tree—and then it might not have occurred to his memory, only that he suddenly caught sight of a tall, grey figure gliding slowly along towards the Hall.

For a few seconds Philip stood quite still, watching it with a sort of awe; and then, being a brave man, it suddenly occurred to him that this phenomenon, whether supernatural or otherwise, required investigating, and he started off in pursuit of the apparition.

Although it was so much the colour of the shadows you could not always define its whereabouts. Philip managed to be pretty certain he was on its track, until he got to the front of the house, and then he found it had mysteriously disappeared. He thoroughly investigated the spot where he had lost sight of it, and lingered about for half-an-hour thinking it might possibly reappear; but at the end of this time his patience gave way, and he went home.

Philip was hardly sure whether he believed in ghosts even now, but he was considerably staggered, and would have liked to have some solution of the enigma that satisfied his own mind.

Assuredly he did not want to believe in Lady Greta's ghost if he could help it—for it was a part of the tradition that no man who looked upon her would be happy in his love, and must expect to share the fate of the un-

happy man whom she had, in life, so cruelly injured and deceived.

But he could trust Greta, he told himself, and did not mean to suspect her just because a figure in grey had crossed his path. After all, there might be some trick; and if not, and it were really true that the spirits of the dead sometimes walked the earth, what could they know of the affairs of men, or the thoughts of other hearts? And why should the Greta of his love be false and cold because once upon a time she had had a false ancestress?

Thus Philip lectured himself as he walked home at a brisk pace, for the rector, who was a great bookworm, had begged him not to be late; and as he so seldom interfered with his movements in any way, Philip felt bound to respect his lightest wish.

He was still up when Philip entered, and called to him as he passed the study door.

"Come in a minute, Philip! Where have you been?" he added, as the young man showed himself on the threshold.

"I have been for a walk," was the hesitating reply.

"You find the evenings dull at home, I can understand that," pursued Mr. Granville; "but take care what you are about, Philip!"

"How do you mean, father?"

"Don't give occasion for scandal," responded the rector, promptly. "Bessie Winkle is, I am afraid, a very bold young woman, and ogles you shamelessly in church, for I have caught her at it."

"Bessie Winkle!" repeated Philip, with difficulty suppressing an inclination to laugh.

"Why, she is simply odious!"

"She seems to be admired in the village."

"Amongst her own class. But you surely gave me credit for better taste, father?"

"I didn't know," replied the old man, who had had this warning on his mind for some days, and was infinitely relieved now it was over; "you are so often out at night."

"You see, I have no one to talk to if I stay at home."

"That is true," returned Mr. Granville, penitently. "When your poor mother died, Philip, I threw myself upon my books for consolation—and as you were young then, and generally away at school, it did not matter; but now, of course, you feel it—and yet, unfortunately, study is my only occupation and consolation both."

"I know that, father, and I do not wish you to change your habits for me. I am very little at home, after all."

"But now you have left college you will have to stay here until you get something to do."

"But I mean to get something to do immediately—it is of the greatest possible importance that I should."

This hint, which would have excited some men's curiosity, entirely escaped the rector's observation, for he simply said,—

"Of course you will be wanting to do something for yourself as soon as possible. I wish Miss Hanwell would help you."

"It would be very extraordinary if she did, father, when you consider that she has entirely ignored our existence for the last ten years."

"She wrote us a very kind letter when your poor mother died, Philip; remember that."

"I do remember that, father; and my mother was the only link between her and us, we know—still, I am her son, and you are the husband she chose, and loved dearly, too, so that it seems rather hard she should give us up just because we had the irreparable misfortune to lose our best friend."

"Perhaps we have seemed neglectful, Philip. She may have thought it was for us to write to her."

"Yes; only she was rich, and we were poor."

"I am sure she never thought about her money, Philip, to do her justice; and I am sorry now I have let her slip away from us, so to speak, for she might have been a good friend to you when I am gone; and I have had a

strange, depressed feeling of late, as if some misfortune were coming upon us."

"Oh! father, don't say that!" Philip cried, unable to hear any confirmation of his own secret misgivings; "I can't bear it!"

"Have you felt this, too?" inquired the rector, peering at him anxiously over his spectacles. "And yet what should happen to us? I could bear anything but disgrace!"

"I trust not. I have borne great sorrows, but I have never had to lower my head in shame before any living creature; and if I knew that time was coming I should pray to die at once, before it could overtake me!"

"It never will come, father! What have I ever done that you should feel this possible?"

"Nothing!" answered the old man, stretching out his hand affectionately to his son. "Forgive me, Philip! but I have had strange fancies of late. I live too much alone—or rather too much with my books—and grow morbid, I am afraid. You have been a good lad, always—and I have nothing to fear."

"Yes, that is it!" answered Philip, cheerfully. "I must get you out more—and suppose we write to Miss Hanwell, father. She might possibly know of some appointment for me—rich people have so much in their power."

"True; but they don't always care to be troubled about other people."

"At any rate, father, let us write and see," Philip returned, as he pushed some paper towards the rector, with a persuasive smile. "There's no time like the present, and I might run and put the letter into the post to-night, in time for the early mail."

Mr. Granville looked up at him a little suspiciously.

"What makes you in such a hurry all of a sudden?" he said.

"Because I want work, father; and at my age there is no time to lose!"

"You are quite sure you have no hankering after Bessie Winkle?"

Like all men, who lead a very secluded, self-concentrated life, it was a long while before any idea from outside made its way into the rector's bemused brain; but when once it had effected a lodgment, it was an equally long while before it could be cast out.

He had observed Bessie Winkle's efforts to attract Philip's attention by the merest chance—not being naturally observant; and now he found it difficult to dispossess himself of the idea that there was some secret understanding between the two; and Philip's sudden eagerness for work had something to do with her.

Philip was tempted to tell his father the truth at this moment, and it would have been well if he had followed the impulse; but he remembered that his secret was also Greta's, and she might not care for him to be too confidential; and, therefore, he decided to consult her before he told the other their story.

"I told you, father, Bessie Winkle was nothing to me," he said, gravely and firmly. "To tell you the truth, she has always been my horror—for I believe her to be an ambitious, designing young person, who would take an ell if you gave her an inch. For that reason I have always been specially careful never even to joke her, although I have known her all my life!"

"That is right!" returned Mr. Granville. "You can't be too careful with a girl of that sort."

And then he gave his mind to his letter. When it was written, and duly addressed, Philip ran out with it to the post, and dropped it into the box.

"If only that should bear fruit," he said, to himself; "I might be able to make a home for Greta at once."

And he went whistling back to the rectory and up to bed, to dream of a sweet, white face, and a pair of soft, brown eyes, and to hear over again Greta's tender whispers, as she lay in his close embrace.

The next day, as Mr. Granville was sitting in his study—his beloved books put aside, in order that he might give all his mind to the preparation of his Sunday's sermon—there

was a ring at the door-bell, and presently the old servant announced,—

"Lord Darminster!"

Mr. Granville knew very little of the young earl, although he was such a near neighbour, the castle being only just outside of Aylesford parish; but, of course, they were acquainted, if nothing more—and he rose to receive his visitor, and got him a chair. He said courteously,—

"This is quite an unexpected pleasure, my lord. I hope you are quite well?"

"Quite! I thank you!" returned the earl, seating himself—and then, after a few common-place remarks about the weather, he added:—"I came to see you to-day, Mr. Granville, because my steward tells me you have a good deal of sickness in Aylesford; and, as I have some land in your parish, I thought it was only my duty to give you a little help."

"You are very kind!" responded the rector, surprised at this tardy consideration. "These are rather hard times. There has been a sort of low fever or ague about."

"So I understand. Wine and quinine are, I presume, the best remedies?"

"So Dr. Lennox says; but a good many of them can only afford bare necessities to keep body and soul together."

"Exactly. I wish I had known about it before, for I am afraid you have been sadly crippled in your charities; but I will try and atone now." And he drew out his cheque-book. "What shall we say, Mr. Granville?"

"Whatever your lordship sees fit; it is not for me to dictate."

"Yes, but what do you want? That's the question."

"There are several families ill, my lord."

"What do you say, then, to fifty pounds?"

"Fifty pounds would enable me to do a great deal for their comfort," replied Mr. Granville, thankfully. "I have a great many poor."

"In that case we had better say a hundred."

"I could not bear to impose upon your lordship's kindness."

"Nonsense; I have enough and to spare. Besides, a good many of my workmen live in your parish, Brooke tells me, and get a share of the Aylesford charities, so I am bound to contribute. We will say a hundred pounds," and he drew the ink towards him, and began to fill in the cheque. "If you want more ask for it," he added, as having signed his name he handed the cheque to Mr. Granville. "I am good for another hundred if necessary. Ah!" rising to greet Philip, who had entered unperceived. "How do you do? None the worse, I hope, for our ghostly experience the other night?"

"No," answered Philip, laughing. "The best of ghosts is that one never believes in them in the daytime."

"I should have thought that was the worst of them," replied his lordship, in the same bantering tone. "In broad daylight I don't care what I believe; but whenever my conscience is troublesome it is always at night."

"Charity covers a multitude of sins," said the rector, looking fondly at the cheque—which represented so much to his mind.

Living so entirely out of the world he knew nothing of Lord Darminster's character, and, besides, was more ready always to believe good than evil of any man. Because the earl was charitable—or seemed so—he believed he was everything else, and was quite ready to reassure him.

Lord Darminster laughed.

"I hope it does," he said; "for I have a multitude of sins to cover."

"Perhaps you exaggerate," objected Mr. Granville.

"On the contrary, I am afraid I suppress."

"I should be sorry to think so, my lord."

"Then don't think so," he answered, cheerfully.

"Very well, then, I won't."

"That's right. But when are you and your son coming to dine with me, Mr. Granville?"

"I never dine out, my lord, but Philip will be glad, I am sure—if he is here."

"Then he thinks of going away?"

"Well! I have written to his godmother, Miss Hanwell! and I am greatly in hopes she will get him a situation."

"Hanwell," repeated his lordship, reflectively; "surely I have heard that name. Where does she live?"

"No 10, Portland-place, London, my lord," returned Mr. Granville, promptly. "She is a very rich person."

"So I should think, for the houses in Portland-place are very highly-rented. She ought to be able to do something for your son, and if she can't, perhaps I may hear of an appointment through my friends."

"You are very kind," Mr. Granville answered gratefully; whilst Philip secretly resolved to starve, before he would owe anything to a rival. However, he did not say so. Discretion was the better part of valour in this instance; and he quite understood how disadvantageous it would be to make an enemy of the earl.

He simply bowed his thanks, without committing himself, and then Lord Darminster rose to take his leave.

"You will come and dine with me, won't you?" he said, as he shook hands with Philip in his turn. "I'll invite Avenley to meet you; he seems to have taken quite a fancy to you."

"I am very much obliged to him."

"Why should you be? he couldn't help it!" returned the other, cheerfully. "You'll think me a dreadful cynic, I dare say; but I make a point of never liking anyone if I can help it."

"Why?" Philip said.

"Because people are sure to disappoint you, you know."

"Not if you don't expect too much of them."

"But I always do."

"Can't you get yourself out of the habit, my lord?"

"I am afraid I can't. Some of us are not made wise by experience, unfortunately."

"I should have fancied your lordship had lived too much in the world to be easily deceived," said Philip, who saw through the other's little affectation, if his father did not.

"Some people never profit by their opportunities," he answered, smiling; "and it is so pleasant to trust others."

With this delightful sentiment on his lips he retired, leaving a very good impression behind him—with the rector, at any rate.

CHAPTER XVII.

Greta did not hope or expect to evade Lord Darminster the next day, and resolved, therefore, to concentrate all her energies upon one point—namely, to keep him so far at bay that, try as he might, he could not get a word with her alone.

She took Alice into her confidence, and the girl was quite willing to help her circumvent Lord Darminster, although she did not care to be mixed up in her painful deception generally. Still it struck her to say,—

"Wouldn't it be better to let him speak out, and have the matter settled at once?"

"I did refuse him most decidedly the other day, but he does not take my refusal, you see, or he would have gone away. Besides, he told me plainly he meant to persevere, and was glad I did hate him, as hatred was more encouraging than indifference."

"Tell him you are indifferent then!"

"He knows better. He must see how I hate him by my eyes, even when my lips are closed."

"Some people only see what they want to see, or rather interpret this in their own way; and then, surely you can't have shown sufficient firmness, Greta. With all his faults Lord Darminster is a gentleman, and I can't understand that a gentleman should persecute a girl with attentions he knows are disagreeable to her."

"Nor I; but you see he has never been thwarted yet, and does not choose to recognise the possibility. He has such a wicked temper

—the very idea of my opposing him makes him want me the more, unfortunately. If mamma were on my side it would not matter, but I have to fight the battle alone, and sometimes I don't feel very brave."

"You always look brave, Greta. I have wondered often at your calmness and self-control."

"So people always say; they don't know it is just a mask I put on in company, and that, at heart, I am just the weakest, most foolish, tenderest-hearted creature in all the world!"

"Then how came you to hide your true self in this way?"

"Of necessity, to save myself daily suffering and constant disputes. To live peacefully with mamma you must acquiesce in all her wishes, for your only chance of getting your own way is by appearing not to have a way of your own at all!"

"Poor Greta! what a life you must have led all these years!" cried Alice, with the deepest sympathy. "A life of continual self-repression. If I could not be myself, I would rather have no existence at all."

"I daresay; but one accustomed even to being artificial!" she replied.

"It must be a very uncomfortable habit."

"Not when it has become a habit. It is only the commencement of that is so trying. In the early days I was often very near dropping my mask, now I feel sometimes as if it were a part of my real self."

"Isn't that the chief danger of wearing one at all, Greta?"

"Perhaps," replied Greta, "but how can I help myself? I have the courage for a bold stroke, but not for anything like persistent opposition. Mamma knows that quite well, and simply smiles over my little 'spurs,' as she calls them."

"Then I suppose you will marry Lord Darminster eventually because you will not be able to keep up a steady resistance?"

"Never!" she answered, with emphasis. "If I have no strength in myself I know where to look for it," smiling radiantly.

Something in her manner urged Alice to say persuasively,—

"Don't do anything rash, Greta, dear. It is so easy to make a mistake—so difficult to rectify it afterwards."

"Your dear little pride!" cried Greta, gaily. "Are you quite sure you are not a great-great grandmother?"

"Do I look like one, then?" she asked, laughing too.

"No; you look like the very sweetest and nicest of girls, if you only wouldn't consider it your duty to be so very moral and improving."

"Surely you wouldn't care for me if I were not moral?"

"Of course I shouldn't; but you might be young," complained Greta. "After all it isn't natural to be so very wise at eighteen."

"I am sure I don't pretend to be wise, Greta."

"But you talk as if you were, which comes to the same thing."

"Because I implore you to be careful."

"What makes you think I need this advice?"

"I don't know. Your manner frightens me."

"You foolish old darling!" said Greta, giving Alice an impulsive hug, which her cousin could as little have expected from her a few days ago as she would have expected an icicle to burn. "It is utterly ridiculous, of course, all things considered, but I don't really believe I can do without you now, and if you were to go away—"

"Well?" said Alice, smiling, and returning her caress.

"I should elope."

"With whom?"

"With anyone who was 'willing.'"

"I fancy there would be plenty of bachelors."

"My dear, you are decidedly partial. It is

very nice of you, and I hope you will continue in the same; and now," sighing, "I suppose we must go downstairs, or mamma will be coming to fetch us. Oh! how pleasant life would be if it weren't for its social duties!"

"Some people enjoy them so much."

"When you are empty-headed and empty-hearted I suppose you do, but not otherwise. I know ahead, when I was dragged from ball to soirée, from soirée to reception until I nearly dropped, I used to wish I were an Indian squaw."

"And had to work like a horse in a more fatiguing way, my dear."

"I never thought of that. I see it is better."

"To hear the life we have
Than the others that we know not of."

"Of course it is," responded Alice, cheerfully. "I made that discovery a long time ago."

Greta could walk now tolerably well; she limped a little, but not enough to be awkward, and was looking more beautiful than ever. Alice thought, as she stood watching her whilst she fixed a bunch of scarlet geraniums in her bosom.

She was very pale, certainly; but then she did not depend upon colouring, and her eyes were so soft and starlike, so full of a wistful sort of tenderness, they moved Alice almost to tears, and made her feel as if she could not leave her for a few weeks, even though she ought to be at work.

And then Lady Avanley had been so gracious the last few days, it almost seemed as if she were welcome now. For one reason she longed to leave Aylshford, for how could she help thinking of Sir Charles where everything recalled him to her mind? But it was not in her to think of herself or her own feelings when she could be of use to others, and so, unfortunately, she decided to keep back the advertisement she had intended to send to the *Times* that day, and not look out for a situation until Lord Darminster had been definitely dismissed, and Greta no longer required her advice and support.

No one was in the drawing-room but Lady Avanley as they entered, and she was in delightful spirits.

"It cheered her so," she said, "to see her dear child so much better. I had your couch put away from the fire," she observed to Greta; "I was afraid the heat might make you feel faint."

"But over there I should be frozen to death," answered Greta, who saw through her mother's little ruse and determined to defeat it.

"My dear Greta, how you do exaggerate. Fancy being frozen to death in a well-warmed drawing-room!"

"I was speaking comparatively, of course."

"Frozen to death is the superlative, it seems to me," she answered, drily. "However, you can have your couch a little closer if you like."

And she gave it a slight push towards the fire.

Greta said nothing more, but presently, when a caller was announced, and Lady Avanley's attention was diverted from her, she also gave it a push which brought it close up to the hearthrug, and stood looking at her mother with an odd sort of triumph in her eyes.

"I told you I should find it too cold out there," she said.

Lady Avanley's lips tightened a little, but she made no sign, and Greta had reason to congratulate herself upon her despatch, when, two minutes later, the door opened to admit Lord Darminster, who came in unannounced, as if he had the right to dispense with all such ceremony.

Alice watched him keenly. He glanced round the room before he crossed the outer threshold, and catching sight of Greta his sombre eyes fired, and a smile broke over his lips.

Just touching Lady Avanley's hand, and

bowing to her visitor, he passed on at once to Greta's couch, and bent low over her to say, in a soft, impassioned voice,—

"This is good to see; I almost feared you meant to disappoint me again."

"I was not aware that I had disappointed you at all," she responded, frigidly.

"Lady Avanley did not tell you then how much I was looking forward to seeing you yesterday?"

"I am not aware that she did; but, in any case, I should not have come into the drawing-room."

"Because you wished to avoid me, I suppose?"

"I wished to avoid everyone yesterday," was the evasive reply. "I did not feel equal to entertaining."

"Or being entertained either?"

"I was not led to expect any very great entertainment," she replied with a cool sort of insolence, which, as a contrast to the blandishments of his lady friends, generally pleased him strangely.

"You were not told I was here, then?" he answered, trying to make a jest of the rebuff he had received.

"Indeed, I was!"

"You see what it is to be in love," he lowered his voice to say. "I have always managed to please where I did not care about it; and now that I do care I am so dull it seems you can't get any satisfaction out of my company."

"I do not complain of your dullness, my dear."

"Of what then?"

"Of your persistence."

"How do you know I am persistent? It's some time since I have had an opportunity of expressing my views; and men are not allowed to change their minds, I suppose?"

"Have you changed yours?" she asked, eagerly, a flush passing across the whiteness of her face as she looked up at him.

"No," came shortly and sternly, and poor Greta's transient bloom and brief smiles died out, and there came a look of dumb pain and reproach into her face, such as he saw in the eyes of his dogs sometimes, when his whip was raised to strike them.

If he had had much of a heart he would have released her then and there; but his passion had mastered him so completely by this time, he would rather have died than let her go. So he stifled the faint gleam of better feeling her look had evoked, and added scornfully,—

"I should be a fool if I did give in when I know that perseverance means success."

"I presume that you are judging me by all the other women you have known?"

"Not at all! I am judging you by yourself."

"How should you know me?" she asked, defiantly.

"I can tell a good deal from your face."

"That you must allow me to doubt, my lord, for my face is never allowed to show my feelings."

"Perhaps not, but it shows your character."

"My mother would tell you I had no character."

"Then I should take the liberty of contradicting her. I am quite ready to admit that you have not Miss Marchmont's firmness and decision; and of course you are in the habit of being ruled, which makes a difference, but you can hold your own up to a certain point."

"And beyond that certain point, perhaps!" she answered, disdainfully.

"I think not. I have calculated so far, and no farther; for that certain point reached, I believe you will fall into my hands—in which case your will will be merged in mine."

"We shall see," she answered, hating him so intensely as she looked into his cool, handsome, daring face, she felt as if she had courage for anything.

"Yes, we shall see; the struggle must begin now in real earnest, for I am due in Paris on New Year's Day, and I want to take my wife with me."



["I AM GOING AWAY FOR A LITTLE WHILE," SAID GRETA, "JUST TO ESCAPE FROM THAT MAN."]

"You may, perhaps, find it possible to persuade some other girl to favour your wishes, Lord Darminster, but you will only take me to Paris on New Year's Day in my coffin!"

"But what about New Year's Eve?" he said, with an insolent laugh; "that would suit me better, on the whole."

"It would suit me even worse," she answered, haughtily.

"How difficult women are to please! Supposing we say the 29th of December?"

"Supposing we mention no day," she said, boiling with indignation, although she was obliged to speak quietly for fear of attracting attention—in spite of Lady Avanley's precautions to withdraw her visitor as far as possible from Greta's couch. "And oh!" with a sigh of relief, "here comes Mrs. Melthorpe."

Lord Darminster had to move then to make way for the new-comer, and sat down at a little distance, watching Greta according to his wont, and listening to every word that passed between the two.

Presently Mrs. Melthorpe said,—

"My own opinion is, a change would do Greta far more good than all Dr. Lennox's tonics just now. What do you say to her coming to me for a week, Lady Avanley?"

Lady Avanley was beginning to protest she could not spare her, when a glance from Lord Darminster nipped her objections in the bud and she began to capitulate gracefully.

"I am afraid the dear child would be so troublesome to you, Mrs. Melthorpe; for, you see, she is still rather helpless, although I quite agree with you, that at this stage a change would be most beneficial."

"Nothing like it!" put in Lord Darminster, cordially to Greta's infinite surprise. "If I might be allowed to advise, I should say let her go by all means."

"Well! as you are all against me I suppose I must give in. But what does Greta say herself?"

"I should like it beyond all things!" she

cried, radiantly. "Dear Mrs. Melthorpe, how kind you are!"

"Kind to myself you mean, I suppose," she replied. "Can't you get ready at once?"

Again Lady Avanley consulted her oracle, and a little nod of the head, imperceptible to others, showed her what to do.

"Of course she can!" she said then. "Marie will pack her things in a few minutes."

"Thank you, mamma!" exclaimed Greta, brightly, as she rose, beckoning Alice to follow her. "I am sure I shall get well directly at The Elms."

Alice helped her to dress, and selected the things she was likely to require for Marie to pack, and soon everything was ready, and Greta was dressed even to her gloves. Then she put her hands on Alice's shoulders, and stooped forward and kissed her on both cheeks.

"I have been very rude and horrible to you, dear, often; but I have loved you all along, and am more grateful than I can describe for all your goodness. I am going away for a little while, just to escape from that man; and if I can only get rid of him, we will be very happy together, won't we? Only you must promise not to go away, dear."

"I won't go away yet, Greta, I promise you," answered Alice, evasively.

And being ready to believe what she wished, like the rest of us, Greta added, between two kisses,—

"That is a darling! I shall look forward to coming back to you, and I'll always be good and nice—then! And now give me one very, very big kiss, for the last, and *au revoir*."

And Alice wondered afterwards what made her echo so wistfully, and sadly,—

"*Au revoir! and soon!*"

(To be continued.)

SPRING CLEANING.—It is a good plan to commence with the cellar. Throw away every-

thing that is no longer of use. Make your fat—which should have been melted into cakes—into soap. If your coal-ashes have not been removed weekly, have them carried out. All empty boxes and barrels, and all boards that you do not wish to save, have split into kindling wood. Then sweep the ceilings and walls thoroughly, and sprinkle the floor, if it is stone or cement, before you sweep it. Examine the walls, and if any rat-holes are found fill them with pounded glass, and cement them over. Cellars should be whitewashed every spring. If plenty of cooking-salt is put into the white wash it will not rub off, and copperas added to it will repel all vermin. Six or eight pounds of copperas to a half-bussel of quicklime will not be too much. After the cellar is finished, begin the attic or storeroom. Everything should be looked over and cleaned out. Every drawer, trunk, box, bag, and bundle must come forth from its hiding-place, and yield its contents to a more vigilant inspection than that of a Custom-house officer. All woollen articles must be beaten and exposed to the sun and air before being consigned to summer quarters. Woollen articles that are out of season should be put in bags made of brown paper or newspapers; if made of the latter, the paper should be double for greater strength, and a soft paper should be chosen so it will not tear. The edges can be pasted together, and when the goods are in, the bags must be pasted up tightly. Unless moth-eggs were in the garments, you need have no fears for their safety if you put them away in boxes or drawers, and scatter a little camphor and borax over them. The floor of the storeroom should be washed in hot alum water, and all corners thoroughly cleaned as a protection against the eggs of moths and other insects.

We ought not to wait until we feel right before attempting to do right. We ought to say kind words and do kindly acts deliberately, even when we should not say and do them instinctively and impulsively.



[A VOICE BEHIND HER CRIED, "CECILE," AND ITS TONES MADE HER HEART LEAP WITH JOY.]

NOVELLETTE.]

FOR EVER AND FOR EVER.

CHAPTER IV.

A RIFT IN THE CLOUD.

'My father urged me sair, my mither didna speak,
But she looked in my face till my heart was like to
break;
My father couldna work, my mither couldna spin,
I toiled day and night, but their bread I couldna win
And Rob maintained them baith, and wi' tears in
his e'e,
Said 'Jeanie, for their sakes, O marry me!''

ANOTHER brilliant, smiling June morning, with a blue and silver sky, and a broad sweep of sun-hine pouring down upon the world. A day that makes one long for the sweet, fresh country, with bluebell-studded banks, vivid green woods and hawthorn hedges, where one can walk on the soft springy young grass instead of the hard, hot, dusty pavement, and breathe the fragrant air, and feel as young and strong and glad as the world in its early summer heyday. Even the parks and Kensington-gardens are looking green and sunny; the summer's dust has not had to time veil and dry out their gay new verdure; the lilacs and laburnums are nearly over, but all the balconies are filled with fresh flowers, and girls are sitting here and there along the streets, with great piles of sweet spring blossoms before them.

But excepting that the sun is coming in at the windows, making the room seem closer and stuffer, and unsettling little ever-wandering minds by reminding them of the world outside, it might be very seasonable in the bare, unlovely schoolroom, where Cecile King is sitting.

She has been governess at Lady Churchill's for three months; and, in spite of a brave, bright spirit, and earnestly pointed will, she finds it very difficult indeed to force herself

into this new groove, so as to fit it comfortably. The *peine forte et dure* of the beginning is over; the pain of telling her parents that she had resolved to act in spite of their opposition, of braving her father's anger, and her mother's reproaches.

"You are disgracing yourself and all of us," said Mr. King. "You have ruined my prospects. Who will think of giving a gentleman's post to me when they hear that my only child has gone into service? Yes, it is no better! You will be paid like a housemaid, and are liable to getting a month's warning; you must submit to rules and regulations; go out and stay in when your mistress pleases; work all day at teaching or making yourself generally useful; smile and look pleased when it is expected of you; put up with scolding and snubbing and insults all day!"

"Oh, Cecile!" wailed her mother; "what am I to do all alone here in this dreary street, without a soul near me to speak to? It is so dreadful to think of it. What will you do if any of our old friends meet you at Lady Churchill's in such a position? You are so impatient—if you had only waited, all would have been well!"

Mrs. King's once low, refined voice had become high-pitched and shrill by continual complaining; it began to jar on Cecile's sensitive ear, though she scolded herself for her hardness and want of sympathy in feeling irritable at the sound.

"You see, mother, dear," she said, cheerfully; "you cannot do without all the little nicenesses that you are used to, and my seventy pounds a-year will go a long way to help buy them for you. And by-and-by papa will get something very good, and then I shall come home, and we will go to a nice home."

"No use after this mad exploit of yours, Cecile. There is something indelible in being a governess. It will be remembered against you all your life. People will say she was Lady Churchill's governess. And we hoped

you would have married so well! Ab, Cecile, I don't reproach you for it; and if you had only not been such a child in your ways you might have married brilliantly before our misfortunes came, and then you, at least, would have been safe!"

This was the first allusion she had made to her hope that Lord Armstead would have married Cecile. The girl did not know to what her mother was alluding, as she had never dreamed that anybody had thought of such a thing; but she herself, suddenly for one instant, thought: What if she had married Lord Armstead? Would it have made any difference? Would he have saved them from ruin?

But she only thought of it as a problem, not for one moment as having been a possibility.

Lady Churchill was a sweet, kind woman, as fond of Cecile as she had time to be. She had been attracted by the bright, young face, and pleased to have one so very refined and accomplished, and yet so simple and girlish, for a companion for her dull, delicate girls.

They had masters who came periodically to the house for music and languages, but Cecile was expected to help them prepare lessons, and to talk in French to them all day, as well as give the usual lessons in English. It was heavy, uninteresting work, for Bertha and Lina would not even do their small best to make Cecile's task lighter.

They hated everything, and would only grumble at the bondage in which they were kept, while Fanny and Flora rode and drove and danced the days and nights away.

"But your turn will come," Cecile would say. "Your sisters did lessons once!"

But she had not always the heart to improve the occasion by representing that the more they attended now to their lessons and the formation of the mind the more they would shine when they burst from their chrysalis state.

She felt sorry for the poor, plain, sickly

twins, to whom a gay, careless, changeable life stood so near, and who were unable yet to taste its sweets, and never would be able to taste them to the full as their pretty elder sisters were doing.

Bertha and Lina were sixteen; next to them came two Eton boys, then two lovely golden-haired girls, and a round, rosy, lisping boy, who made mirth and sunshine come into Cecile's life.

She had entire charge of the three, and found even their naughtinesses a delightful change from the dulness and apathy of the twins. She had never been used to children; but a great love for them had lain dormant in her heart all this time, and now it poured forth its floods upon them.

She felt so dreadfully inclined to play with them instead of to teach them; to laugh when they were noisy and unruly; to excuse lessons when great tears would come into Muriel's blue eyes at the sight of a column of spelling, when Evelyn would look dolefully at her music, and stop every three minutes to hear if the church clock in the square had not chimed the half-hour that would bring release.

Roy was only eight, so she was not expected to teach him much, only to make him be good and tolerably quiet, to relieve the two nurses, who were fully occupied by five little toddling mites; for Sir Francis Churchill was not rich, and had fourteen children, of whom the eldest was only nineteen; so a good deal of nurse's work fell to the share of the governess who, in her turn, was supplemented by occasional masters.

This warm sunny day was one of the grey, sunless days of Cecile's life. The twins were not well. They had caught cold a few days before. So the windows were not opened, and the schoolroom was unbearably close. Muriel was practising; that is to say, she was trying to play an easy arrangement of the overture to the *Crown Diamonds*.

The younger ones used up the old music of Fanny and Flora, and Cecile often longed to see a nice fresh new piece on the piano, by Schubert or Schumann; it would have been so much more interesting teaching them than those yellow torn and pencil-fingered pieces. Muriel played in a manner most exasperating to be heard by anyone who wanted to attend to something else. She played at least one wrong note in every bar; she galloped through the easy bars, and laboured through the difficult ones, now and then skipping one altogether.

Cecile was trying to teach Evelyn a French verb, to keep Roy's attention confined to his sums, and now and then to answer the twins, who referred to her for a German word to save themselves the trouble of looking in the dictionary.

"Muriel, that is a sharp—play the bar again. No, dear; you cannot say *je finissais*, it is *je finissais*. Go on! Yes, Lina, 'dass' sends the verb to the end, and it must be in the subjunctive—you know that quite well! Oh, Muriel! do try and do better; you are not attending to your notes!"

Here the door opened and Lady Churchill came in.

"How hot and tired you all look!" she said. "Muriel, we can hear all your wrong notes in the drawing-room. Would it not be better if you sat beside her, Miss King? She seems to be stumbling terribly through the piece."

Poor Cecile was always dreadfully discouraged by Lady Churchill's visits to the schoolroom. She felt so guilty, as if Muriel might have been a perfect pianist by now, had it not been for the inexperience and inattention of her governess; as if Lady Churchill would blame her, and send her away, and refuse to recommend her to anybody else.

But Lady Churchill meant to be as kind as possible. She was only stupid, and wanted to say something; and never reflected for a moment that she might say the wrong thing, instead of something pleasant.

She looked over Lina's shoulder at her

German exercise, said that Bertha was pale, kissed Roy and laughed at his clumsy figures, and then went on to say what had brought her.

"Would you care to go to the opera to-night, Miss King? I find that the girls have promised to go to the Haymarket with Mr. and Mrs. Atkinson; and here has my sister sent word that they cannot use their box to-night at Her Majesty's, and she thought I should like to go to hear Nilsson in *Faust*. I shall be so glad if you will go with us."

Cecile's face glowed like a summer sunrise, then suddenly clouded, as she said,—

"Thank you, so much, Lady Churchill; I think I would rather stay at home. Perhaps Bertha and Lina will be well enough to go."

Lady Churchill's face clouded, too, for a subject was revived that had been a cause of disagreement between them. It was one of the difficulties of Cecile's position that Lady Churchill wanted to be so very kind, and to make her quite one of the family, letting her remember as little as possible that she was on a dependent footing in the house.

So she always asked Cecile to come into the drawing-room when there was a party, though there might not be room for her at the dinner-table; and Cecile, to her annoyance, almost always refused.

If she did come she wore shabby, old dresses—at least they looked so amongst the brilliant toilettes of the present season; and Cecile scarcely had a salary quite sufficient to buy herself new dresses.

Lady Churchill felt vexed and injured. Cecile understood quite well now why she did; though she had been puzzled at first, thinking her pretty white cashmere, and her delicate Nile-green silk the best and freshest of her evening dresses—quite presentable enough to sit in a corner or to play accompaniments in.

How could she buy dresses when her mother was pining in her lonely little house for so many little things that were now beyond her reach?

And she could not explain to Lady Churchill, and reveal what she knew her father and mother were so anxious to keep secret—their extreme poverty, and the necessity there was for Cecile's money to keep the house going.

Mr. King had at last condescended to accept a post in a merchant's office that brought in two hundred a year; and still he grumbled at the small house and the inexperienced servants.

Alas! Lord Armstead's two hundred pounds had all gone. Bills had come in for coals, food, and gas, taxes, rates, wages, cab-fares—one thing after another—and no supplies from the master of the house to meet the never-ceasing demand.

He ordered in provisions, never thinking of the cost. The bills came to Mrs. King, who gave them in her frightened way to Cecile, trusting in her to see that they were paid somehow and some time.

She knew no more about money than a child—how it came and how it went. Cecile took each new bill with a heavy heart, kept it for a week or two, still hoping for money from her father; then the burden of debt was too heavy to carry, so she would go to the diminishing hoard in her dressing-case and pay it.

She must have money, or it seemed hard for her mother to be left alone with her husband, who never had a kind or hopeful word to say when he was in the house.

She had no friends near. Those of her old life did not come; some believing that Mr. King did not wish to be found out in his retirement, others not caring sufficiently for them to make the pilgrimage to Beaconsfield-street. The people in the neighbourhood held aloof, knowing that the Kings held themselves much too high to associate with them; so the little house was almost as complete a solitude as a cell in the Thebaid, and Mrs. King wept and lamented her days away.

But Cecile went to the opera, and looked so bright and pretty in her white cashmere, with

roses in her hair and at her neck, and the glow of happy anticipation in her face, that Lady Churchill smiled approvingly when she saw her.

It was so new to Cecile to find herself in that brilliant theatre, the circles round and round as full of light and colour and beauty as the stage.

Lady Churchill was very kind, and told her who a great many people were. She forgot her troubles for the time, in the delight of the hour.

Then came the opera—the lovely music, the thrilling story; Nilsson's marvellous voice, most perfect of German peasant-maidens; Trebelli, dark and piquant, most charming of Siebels. Cecile leant forward with glowing cheeks and dilated eyes, losing herself utterly in Marguerite's woes. Then, turning at the end of the church scenes, to meet a glance of sympathy from Lady Churchill, she saw, or rather became conscious, that a man in the stalls was looking intently at her.

For a moment the light faded out of her face; all Gretchen's sorrow had vanished, only her own real troubles stood out from the background. Then she smiled a happy contented smile, glad that Lord Armstead had come back; now surely he would bring good luck with him!

Lady Churchill had noticed the change of expression, and followed Cecile's eyes till she discovered the tall, distinguished-looking man in the stalls. She did not know him even by sight, and wondered greatly why the sight of him should stir up emotion of such complex kind.

For a moment she thought it must be some one who had had an evil influence over Cecile's life, and who had her in his power; for she read a great many novels, and this looked very like a bit of one of them. But she saw the smile that followed the first paling of extreme surprise; and then she wove a love story out of her romantic brain, all in two or three seconds. Had an old lover turned up, one thought to be dead or gone for ever? Had he forsaken Cecile in her poverty! Yes, that was the most likely thing. So in her kind, sentimental heart there was raging quite a little storm of indignant feeling against the innocent stranger.

She knew very little about Cecile's former life; she was too busy to find time for curious questioning.

She was always visiting, or shopping, or driving, or receiving, or attending committee meetings, or going to church; for she was very High Church, and went every afternoon to Margaret-street, when she was not otherwise engaged. She only knew that the Kings had been very rich indeed, living in first-rate style, and that they had come down with a tremendous crash, owing to something about mines. But to-night she had time to ask questions, and really felt a motherly interest in her fair young governess.

"Is that an old friend?" she asked, after Cecile had bowed and recovered her composure. "I do not remember his face. Perhaps he does not come up to town; and yet he does not look like a stay-at-home country squire."

"It is Lord Armstead!" said Cecile, still smiling happily. "He lived near us at home. He has been abroad a long time. I did not know he had returned."

Lady Churchill was rather disappointed. An earl was not at all likely to be in love with and marry her governess—most likely he was married already. And she did not quite like Cecile having a bowing acquaintance with an earl. It would make her forget or despise her duties.

"Ah!" she said, "I have heard of him. Rather eccentric, is he not? One never meets him anywhere. Is his wife with him?"

"He is not married!" said Cecile, a flush of surprise overspreading her face.

"Poor little thing," thought Lady Churchill, half superciliously; "she has evidently been in love with him in the old days. A man much older than herself, I fancy, who has

very likely amused himself and made a fool of her."

So she said no more about Lord Armstead, thinking it the truest kindness not to take any notice.

And Cecile forgot all about Marguerite and Faust and Siebel, in the terrible remembrance that she had spent Lord Armstead's money, and could never hope to repay it!

In the crush outside—when they were waiting for the carriage—he came up to them, smiling joyfully, with outstretched hand. He had no idea who Cecile's friends were, and how she happened to be with them; and was slightly surprised when she introduced him to Lady Churchill. He gave his arm to Cecile, and put her into the carriage; but there was neither time nor opportunity for any private conversation.

"I shall call on Mrs. King to-morrow," he said, as the carriage was slowly moving on; then he was lost in the crowd and darkness.

It made Cecile feel so very happy to have spoken to him, and touched his arm, and seen his kind, affectionate eyes.

Lady Churchill talked to her husband, until they reached home; where they deposited Cecile, and went on to a reception.

Cecile went straight to her room, threw open the window, and sat down to think. The stars were all shining in the summer sky, with pale, uncertain gleam; for the sunset lights had scarcely faded away from the June twilight. The air was cool, and fragrant with the scent of the flowers in the balcony below. The great city lay all round, dark, and almost silent.

Cecile by the window, in her white dress, sat on in a happy waking dream; not actively thinking, only enjoying the restful content that Lord Armstead's presence had brought to her. She was no longer friendless and alone; she had a pillar of strength to lean upon.

He was so rich, so great, so strong; he must be able to help them, if he would. He would at least go and see her mother, and brighten her life for a little time; and surely he would advise her father, if not exert himself to get him a good appointment.

She sat on for so long, that she was aroused at last by the noise of returning wheels; then she saw that the eastern sky was flushing in the dawn of a new summer day. She heard Fanny and Flora laughing and chattering on the stairs; then bedroom doors were shut, and all was silent, and she went to bed, to dream that she was wandering along the corridors at Armstead Castle, with Norman Leigh in an admiral's uniform.

Lady Churchill liked the children to take their daily walk directly after the schoolroom breakfast, on these hot summer days. It was a time of keen enjoyment to Cecile, who felt quite like a country girl again, as she walked on the soft green grass of Kensington-gardens, beneath the umbrageous trees, drinking in the fresh morning air, and the scent of the grass and trees, from which the dew had scarcely departed. Here, two mornings after the night at the opera, they met Lord Armstead—one of whose eccentricities was early rising. Roy and Evelyn had lagged behind, but were in sight; Muriel was walking with Cecile. He looked extremely surprised to see her, and much puzzled by the presence of the children.

Cecile greeted him with a smile like the very essence of the summer morning. He did not stand, but walked on by her side, talking of the opera, then of his travels; waiting till Muriel should leave them, to discuss the subjects on which they were both longing to open their hearts.

A new light had come into her grey life—a warm, gladdening flood like the sunshine that was bathing the gardens in its radiance. Her blood ran faster through her veins, her eyes danced and sparkled as they used to do; and all this was not a bit because she had grown to love Lord Armstead—in his sense of the word—only because she liked him and trusted him, and was so pleased that a piece of her old life had come to stir her up and remind her

that she was a girl, and not a tired, weary-hearted woman bowing under a load of care.

And Lord Armstead misunderstood it all. A wild hope sprang up in his heart that at last his patience had conquered, that a fair flower had burst into blossom whose seed must have been hidden unsuspected all this time; but he could say nothing with all those little pitchers about with their long ears. He only alluded vaguely to his visit to Mrs. King, saying that he had found her looking very delicate, and was afraid she must be dull without her daughter. He did not say that, when he had mentioned having met Cecile at the theatre with the Churchills, she had answered in a nervous, flurried manner, guiltily flushing, "Oh yes! they are new friends of—ours, Cecile is very fond of Lady Churchill," and said nothing about teaching. He understood it perfectly well now, seeing Cecile's manner of authority with the children, and how they asked her leave, and called her Miss King.

At last he found that a *little-a-little* was impossible. Evelyn and Roy joined them, and even consecutive conversation was over. Saying: "I shall see you again," he took leave, and time being up, Cecile took her charges home and resumed her daily duties with a braver, lighter heart.

Of course the children told their mother of the *rencontre* in Kensington-gardens. She asked particulars, and heard that it was Lord Armstead who had walked with them for so long. She did not like it; it was altogether out of place; and yet there was no saying what might happen.

It would not do to offend Cecile. The best plan would be to turn the course of Lord Armstead's attentions into a near, but more suitable channel. So she sent him cards for her parties, hoping that the interest he seemed to take in Cecile would prove the beginning of an interest in those who were proximate to her, and at last settle and confine itself to an undivided and definite interest in Fanny or Flora.

CHAPTER V.

AULD ROBIN GRAY.

"My heart it said nay—I looked for Jamie back;
But the winds they blew high, and the ship it was a
wreck."

But a day or two of unrelieved monotony put out the new sunlight in Cecile's life. It was just as hard as ever to see Fanny and Flora go for their rides in the Row, and their endless dances—to see their pretty new dresses, and to hear distant echoes of the gay, light-hearted world outside the schoolroom door, and remember that this was to have been her first season.

The lessons were as wearisome and uninteresting as ever, Evelyn's false notes as abundant, Bertha as listless and cross, Roy and Muriel unsettled by the fine weather, and longing for holidays.

Then came a grand flower-show, and they all went—Lady Churchill, her come-out daughters, and the children.

Cecile begged off. She never could endure to go to those places in charge of the little ones like a nurse; it was so much worse than staying away altogether to be amongst all those merry, well-dressed, happy girls, and yet not of them. So she asked for a holiday, and went to see her mother.

"Oh, child!" cried Mrs. King, when she entered the hot, common-looking drawing-room; "I thought you were never coming again! I am sure I'm ill; I cannot get about at all! I shall die in this horrible street!"

Cecile soothed and caressed her mother, and listened to the long story of small daily trials that lay in front, and of the great anxiety always behind them.

She was sure the drains wanted looking at, and Mr. King said he had no money for such things, though she believed the landlord ought to do it if anybody would take the trouble to tell him.

Jane cooked worse than ever, instead of im-

proving. Mr. King sent in expensive materials for dinner, but they were completely wasted in the cooking.

Mary was always dirty and untidy, and grumbled, and she believed their wages were overdue. And so on for a long time; but Cecile knew by experience that all the hoarded woes of the last week or two must have an outlet now, so she talked cheerfully and encouragingly, and drew it all out.

Then Mrs. King told her of Lord Armstead's visit, as if it was another injury.

"He expected to see you," she said; "and said he had seen you at the opera with Lady Churchill. Of course, I could not tell him how you happened to know the Churchills!"

"Why not, mother?" asked Cecile, holding her small head proudly erect, a proud rush of colour to her cheek, a proud flash in her eye.

"Why not, Cecile! Would you really expect me to tell a man in Lord Armstead's position how you had lowered yourself? Why, in the eyes of people like that, you might as well be a housemaid or a shop-girl!"

This old string had been harped upon so often to no avail, and only brought fresh notes of pain to vibrate in poor Cecile's heart. She turned the conversation by asking if there was any news from Ashtorpe.

"Yes. By-the-bye, I had a letter from Mrs. Leigh yesterday. They are uneasy about that nephew who used to stay with them: sometimes—don't you remember? He was a sailor. There is bad news, or no news, or something about his ship, the *Osiris*—or something like it. I cannot imagine why she took the trouble to write and tell me! Perhaps she thought I might be interested, as he used to play with you when you were children! And one of the curates is going to be married; and Ashtorpe is still standing empty. But the letter is lying somewhere!"

Cecile rose quickly to seek it, with a sharp pain at her heart. She quite understood why the letter had been written. With her natural instinct of womanly sympathy, Mrs. Leigh knew that Cecile would wish to share their anxiety, and yet she had no sufficient grounds to warrant writing the letter to her directly. She was no letter-writer; and had only twice sent a few hurried, scrawling lines to Mrs. King, chiefly parish news, with an inquiry after herself and husband, and daughter, crowded in at the end, like an after-thought.

This letter was wretchedly scant of detail. "We are anxious for news of the *Osiris*—Norman Leigh's ship—it is long overdue at Trinidad; and some uncomfortable reports have reached the Admiralty—nothing official; but, of a ship, I fear that no news is bad news. We had a letter from him a month ago, or more—time flies so, one loses count."

"He inquired after you and Cecile, and said that he was going to shoot *celibris* instead of grouse, and have them stuffed to trim a dress for Cecile."

Cecile went home, her mind so full of Norman, that she hardly thought of her mother's complaints, and of her usual grinding worries. Could it really be possible that any one so full of life, and health, and hope as Norman, should have passed away from the wide, beautiful world which he had so loved and enjoyed—that his place should know him no more!

She could not realise that one so young, so intensely alive in every nerve and fibre, should be lying cold and still under the deep green sea. One thing after another had been taken from her. And now that the hidden, but deep-seated hope was all but shut out of her future, she found how dear a hope it had been. Her sky had indeed closed in all round—no more sunshine, nothing but dull heavy clouds before and behind, all her atmosphere heavily charged with tears.

How tiresome Mrs. Leigh was to say so little! Norman one day had been thinking of Cecile, out on the blue southern sea, or on some bowery tropical island, and there was nothing in the letter by which she could fix the date. She wanted to search back, in her memory to find what she had

been doing at the moment when his though might have met hers; but it might have been any day, or month, or hour of the day.

She surprised Lady Churchill by taking every opportunity of hunting through the *Times*, but there was no mention yet of the *Oisiris*. She could not write to Mrs. Leigh, to ask if they had had further news.

She went to see her mother very soon, but of course she had not had another Ashthorpe letter. Cecile knew that it was all but impossible, and yet she was cross and impatient, and left her mother sooner than usual, in the middle of her almost endless narration of her daily annoyances.

The summer advanced, and the last July days came, when the children really could not be persuaded to attend to their lessons; and Lady Churchill consulted with her husband and daughters upon the important topic of where to go. Economy must be considered, as they were such a large family. She hoped Miss King would not want to go home, it would be so inconvenient having all the children in sea-side lodgings without the usual staff of superintendence.

One sleepy afternoon, when Cecile was trying to forget her aching head and giving her mind to a geography lesson—when the windows were opened in the fruitless attempt to persuade some of the heavy, smoky air to come into the close schoolroom, so much over-populated in proportion to each person's due of cubic feet of atmosphere—when all that ought to be expected of human nature was to lie on a shingly beach, under the shadow of a chalk-cliff, and listen lazily to the plash of the waves—a card was brought to Cecile by the schoolroom-maid, who was brimming with astonished curiosity, and spoke with more than her usual respect.

"The Earl of Armstead!" read Cecile, on the small oblong piece of paste-board. Then said aloud: "This will do for to-day, Muriel! Go and practice. And Evelyn, you must have your verb ready by the time I come back!"

She was too tired and listless to feel any curiosity or even interest in Lord Armstead's visit, but was glad of an excuse to leave the lessons.

The drawing-room looked so pleasant and cool when she went in. All the blinds were down, shutting out the heat and glare; and the great stands of flowers and ferns stood fresh and sweet in the shade. The dark harmonious tints of the walls and hangings were so grateful to her tired eyes after the bare, shabby schoolroom.

Lady Churchill and her daughters were at a *matinée musicale*. There was nobody in the room but Lord Armstead. He came quickly forward to meet her as she entered, pale and quiet, in her simple cambric dress, that clung to her in soft folds, trailing behind her.

It was not the bright, merry girl whom he had learnt to love, but a new, not less lovable Cecile, all soft motion and tender harmony of pale colour—a large-eyed, spirit-like maiden, in the dim, half-light, coming towards him.

But his artistic eye was conscious of supreme satisfaction, though he felt so much the more tenderly towards her, seeing how she had lost her old self. He took her hand silently, and held it in his, looking into her sweet, upturned eyes. A faint surprise came into them, then a look of fear, and she gently tried to draw her hand away.

He held it firmly in his. He was too eager to say what he had come to say to make any preamble, or even to open conversation by talking of indifferent subjects. She cast her eyes down, reading the story told so plainly in his; she flushed and trembled, and would have broken away from him had she been able.

"Cecile!" he said, in his deep, low musical voice, quite strong and steady, though his pulses were all throbbing at fever rate. "I have come to ask you if you love me—or if you can promise to love me! I cannot do without you

any longer! I have waited very patiently—have I not? And I will still wait if you tell me that, though you do not love me yet, you will do so if I give you a little more time. But I think you love me a little now! And I promise to be content with that, if you will give me your old, sweet self; for I know I can make you love me more when you are all my own. I cannot possibly tell you in words how dearly I love you—and have loved you all this time! How I have longed for the right to protect you, and to help those who are near and dear to you!"

She did not speak, but lifted her eyes again, now all wet with unshed tears.

He read a good augury in their humid grey depths, and went on,—

"Sweetest, I would not bribe your love. I would say nothing of anything that I can give you, excepting my love, if I thought you had none for me. But I know you have a little—perhaps more than you know of; but I am so much older than you that it is difficult for you to look upon me as your lover—your husband. I think, I know I can make you happy, my own, dear little love; though I am so unworthy of your fresh innocent young heart. And you are my first love, Cecile, though I am forty-seven years old. It seems ridiculous, incredible, but it is true. I never cared enough for a woman in my life to ask her to marry me until I saw you, one cold March morning, riding along the lane with a red wing in your hat."

"Ah! Poor Hero!" sighed Cecile. "I wonder who rides Hero now?"

"You shall have Hero back again, if she is in Kamschatka!" said Lord Armstead. "You shall be like a princess with a magic ring, and not have one wish ungratified. I will buy Ashthorpe, or any other place, and settle it on your mother for her life. Think of her, Cecile. Don't take me because of her; don't let any outside consideration sway you. But you know how glad she would be, and what a difference it would make in her life. My child, I cannot leave you to toil on here, and waste your youth and health. I must have you at once, to care for, and to make up to you for the sad year you have come through!"

"I don't know!" she said, at last. "I cannot see. I do like you very much, but I am not sure whether—I cannot bear to pain you!"

"You must not think of that. It would be a sharp pain, but nothing like the lifelong pain of finding you had married me, and could not love me after all. But you do love me, Cecile? You are tired and taken by surprise, and the little shoot is choked up by the cares of this world, like the seed that fell amongst the thorns. Clear them away, and there will be fruit to come a thousandfold!"

Suddenly a suspicion, hitherto unthought of, crossed him.

"I will not give you up now, Cecile!" he said, "unless you have given away your best love already. If that should be the case, in pity tell me so. Are you free, bound by no promise—by no sense of honour, to another man?"

"I am free," she answered; "but I am so tired, and I cannot think. Will you give me until to-morrow to think about it? I will write and tell you!"

A pang of disappointment smote him, but he concealed it, and answered, calmly and gently,—

"So be it, then. I would rather you had trusted yourself to me at once, without consideration; but when a man is as hungry as I am he will take half a loaf gladly, lest he have to go without bread at all!"

"I am so sorry!" she said, with soft, pleading eyes. "I think I am stupid with the heat, and my head is full of latitude and longitude, and won't take in anything else. I care for you too much to refuse you, and I am not sure whether I care enough to marry you. I wish you had not said this! I wish we could always be friends—for I want a friend very much, and

feel so glad and safe when I am with you! Only let me consider until to-morrow!"

"Ah, Cecile, real love does not want to consider! Only promise me, darling, that the one subject of consideration shall be—whether you can learn to love me truly or not."

"Why, of course, it is only that!" she said; and he read perfect truth in her clear eyes.

He was not afraid that she might marry him for the sake of his rank; but he was just a little doubtful that she might consent for her mother's sake, and he did so crave to be loved for the sake of his love and himself only.

Then he said good-bye, and a sudden impulse prompted him to stoop and kiss her brow.

She did not shrink, only faintly blushed, and he felt a chill of disappointment that she took it in such a quiet way.

"I am going to look at my Irish property," he said. "If I have a good letter to-morrow I shall put it off for a week or two; but it is necessary that I should go as soon as possible. If I have a bad letter I shall go at once."

He smiled as he said it, turning on his way to the door, as he had forgotten all about it until this last minute. She was standing just where he had left her, in the midst of a long dusty sunbeam that was stealing through a chink in the blind.

She looked such a sad, lonely little creature that he could not help coming back to kiss her again in his grave, fatherly way. There was no learned seer beside them to tell him that it was unlucky to say good-bye twice.

He got into the line of the sunbeam. It glanced upon a rare vase of Venetian glass on the mantelpiece, broke into a dozen prismatic colours, and was reflected upon Lord Armstead, resting like a blood-red stain upon his brow. Cecile barely saw it then, but recalled it vividly afterwards.

Then he left her, and she heard the door close behind him.

His last speech had, unintentionally, done more towards winning her love than all his other words, for she knew that he was going to Ireland because she had told him that it was his duty, and the knowledge came to her with a sudden, wonderful thrill—it was her first taste of power.

He had been at Lady Churchill's "at home" three nights ago—the only time he had responded to her invitation—and talking to Cecile, for a few minutes in the crowded music-room, the conversation had accidentally turned upon Irish hunting, and he admitted, that though he had a large estate in Connaught, inherited with his second title of Viscount Connemara, he had never been in Ireland in his life.

"It is a black, barren country," he said. "I do not draw income enough from it to pay the expenses—the agent's salary, and so forth. There are very few inducements held out to an Irish landlord to visit his property."

"I think you ought to go and see it," said Cecile. "They have been talking a great deal here at lunch about Ireland. Sir Francis has friends on both sides, and it is very interesting to hear them when they come; for Lady Churchill is Irish, and feels very strongly on the subject."

"And do you feel strongly, too?" he asked, with an amused smile.

"I don't know enough about it," she said, simply. "But it seems to me that, if the landlords lived more in Ireland and saw things for themselves, instead of trusting to paid agents, they might make things better for the poor people. One really hears such very sad stories, you know."

No more was said at the time; so Cecile was very much surprised to find that her words had been pondered over and acted upon. It was so strange to think that her opinion should sway this grave, clever, elderly man, when it was so difficult to make the children obey her, and to persuade her mother to see matters in her own light! Then, all at once, she remembered her duties, and flew to the schoolroom to resume them.

She had left comparative order and found chaos. Here—at any rate, for the present—her will was not supreme. A reign of misrule had begun; and Cecile contemplated the inky tablecover and pinafiores, the books thrown about the floor, the dog tearing and toasting the loose music-sheets, the riotous children, in helpless dismay. Then Lady Churchill came in, hearing the noise as she returned from the concert, and was vexed and put out. She would not scold Cecile before the children, but the reproach was implied in her glances and the tone of her voice.

Cecile had hoped that Lady Churchill would not hear of the visitor she had had; but Evelyn, giving as an excuse for their naughtiness, that Miss King had been so long in the drawing-room, and they did not know what they had to do, she was obliged to answer the questioning look.

"Lord Armstead called!" she said, confusedly; "he is going to Ireland."

"Indeed! I am sorry we were out!" said Lady Churchill, coldly. "I suppose he left some message for me?" She did not say: "As he did such a very unusual, such an unprecedented thing as to ask for my governess, finding us all out;" but she thought it, and looked it.

"No," he merely said he was going to Ireland," said Cecile, anxious to conciliate, and conscious that she was all but telling a fib in her wishfulness to give some appearance of a message to her ladyship to his parting words.

Lady Churchill had always been very careful to avoid wounding Cecile by assuming the tone of a mistress, but to-day she was hot and tired and put out. It was nearly the end of the London season, and, in spite of all the trouble and expense to which they had been put, an impossible-to-be-accepted offer to Flora from a penniless government clerk had been the only result of the campaign. And here was an earl, a peer of the realm, running after her governess, when he might have run after pretty Fanny or highly-cultured Flora! She must get rid of a governess of this dangerous kind as soon as she could find a plausible excuse.

Cecile had her evening all to herself to her great satisfaction, and she tried to weigh all the pros and cons calmly and honestly. She was very resolute in trying to thrust out of sight the anxieties and humiliations of her life, but she could not help smiling once or twice to think how surprised Lady Churchill would be to find out that it was a future countess whom she was tacitly rebuking and snubbing. It was hard, too, to put away all thought of her mother. She had promised to think of love, and love only, and she would be true to Lord Armstead's trust.

She would not have lights brought; she could think so much better in the slowly gathering twilight, looking out over the dim, empty park. She was like Margaret with the daisy, only it was "Ich liebe ihn—ich liebe ihn nicht."

She did like him so much, and was so grateful for his love; and thought, now and then, that she would so gladly give up her life to make him happy. But was it love? or had she given her real love to Norman Leigh!

It seemed such ages since she had said goodbye to Norman—a year ago—on Ashthorpe sands; but she remembered him, oh! so well—his bright, loving eyes, with their infinite trust. She knew he had always loved her, and meant to tell her so when he came back. She had said truthfully that she was free; but was she not really as much bound by Norman's trust in her as she would have been by spoken promise?

"And now, perhaps, he was drowned!" she said that to herself over and over, but she did not believe it one bit; she was sure he would come home and claim her soon. And how should she feel if she were married to Lord Armstead and met Norman suddenly alone, or "in a crowd," like the girl in the song!

In one clear flash of her vivid imagination she saw it all! She knew that the love that she might grow to feel for Lord Armstead was something very different from the love that would spring forth at the sight of Norman Leigh—at the sound of his voice.

She had had so little time for thinking of Norman that he had become shadowy and vague. Lord Armstead naturally was a very substantial figure in her foreground. But to-night she forgot all about Lord Armstead, as soon as she made up her mind that she had not the love to give that he wanted, and sat on, hour after hour, dreaming happily about Norman Leigh.

She never doubted his love and constancy, though it might have seemed as if she were throwing away substance for shadow; such substance, too, and such shadow! An earl, who loved her with all his heart, and was waiting eagerly for her decision to carry her away from poverty and care and humiliation; a sailor, almost penniless, who loved her once in a boyish way, and who might have forgotten her and had a dozen loves since—who might even now be lying in a watery grave.

Then a clock striking eleven broke upon her happy dreaming. She started, remembering that her letter must be written. It was quite dark; she sought a light, then got out her desk, selected a pretty sheet of notepaper, with a blue and silver monogram—a relic of her old stock of stationery—and wrote the letter, carefully and steadily folded and closed it, and put it aside to be posted in the morning.

Lord Armstead passed a restless night, and got up early to be in time for the first post, like a school-girl expecting a valentine.

The post brought nothing but business letters. He told himself that the letter could not possibly have come yet; so he breakfasted, and then went to the "Travellers" to pass away the time.

"Going to Ireland!" exclaimed a friend, in dismay. "This is certainly the most rash of all your exploits! Here is a man endowed with every good thing that fortune can shower on her favourites, and who has spent his life in trying to get rid of it! You think you have a charmed life, Armstead. You have come safe from Indian jungles, and African deserts, and Greek brigand-haunts, and you will not rest until you have run the most dangerous risk of all—to beard the Irish tenant in his den! Take a friend's advice: provide yourself with a bullet-proof suit of chain-armour, and make your will!"

The last part of the advice struck Lord Armstead as a very good idea. He returned to his hotel, found that no letters were awaiting him; then he went to his lawyer, whom he instructed concerning his will.

"Bring it to me to-night," he said. "It is possible that I may be off in the morning, and I want it all complete, and off my mind."

Half-an-hour after he got Cecile's letter. It was a great blow, for he had grown so hopeful, almost to certainty. He went out again, and walked rapidly through the streets, forgetting all about his appointment in his fierce anguish. But the air and movement brought with them—not resignation, but hopefulness. He would not give up.

Then he went to his rooms and found the lawyer waiting.

Should he sign the will as it was drawn up? Had not circumstances changed since the morning! No, he would not believe it; and if they should have changed it was all the same. He signed the will.

CHAPTER VI.

SHADOW AND SUNSHINE.

"I saw my Jamie's wrath, for I could nae think it he, Till he said, 'I'm come back for to marry thee.'"

In another fortnight the windows of Sir Francis Churchill's house in London were all closed and shuttered. A charwoman was left in charge, and the family were scattered to the four winds.

Sir Francis and his wife, with Flora and Muriel, went on a visit to old Lady Churchill in her Somersetshire dower-house, their own country house being let on a long lease.

Fanny had gone with a party to the Engadine. The younger ones, in charge of the nurses, and nominally under Bertha's suzerainty, were all sent to a cheap sea-side lodging.

Cecile insisted on going home to her mother, who was ill, though Lady Churchill was annoyed. She was very kind to Cecile; but she was one of those people who grudge showing any kindness that may cause the least inconvenience to themselves.

Cecile carried her point, and went off with her quarter's salary in her pocket—three crisp five-pound notes, two sovereigns, and some odd silver.

"You and I are going away, mother, to spend all this money," she said, with her sunshiny smile and fresh, cheery voice.

"Ah! Cecile, child, you must not spend your money on me. And how can I go away for pleasure when there are so many things not paid for, and papa looks so sad and worried? How can I leave him?"

"I would not spend the money on going away if it were not quite necessary, mother. It will not cost nearly all this money; and it will be much cheaper than the long doctor's bill that will be the consequence if you do not have rest and change at once!"

They went to a dull, vulgar little sea-side town on the English Channel; but the sea breezes were as pure and life-giving as they were at Brighton and Scarborough, and brought the colour back to Mrs. King's cheeks, and the light to her eyes. Cecile, too, threw off her cares—found hourly enjoyment in looking at the sea, always changing and always the same—hourly amusement in watching the nurses and children on the beach, and the manners and customs of the grown-up visitors.

It was a bright, hot day in the middle of August, with a haze lying on the sea, and Cecile, having bathed, walked along the shore to dry her hair. She had a novel, and, finding a comfortable bank of sand, she sat down to enjoy it. Mrs. King never came out in the morning. The catering for the day's provisions, the bathe, the walk, and the novel were Cecile's invariable morning routine. So far the rare variations in the weather had been the only break in the monotony, so she settled down to her book, and soon was buried in the story—a thrilling complication of mystery and marvel, by Wilkie Collins—certain of an uninterrupted hour to finish it in before dinner.

The waves broke upon the rocks close to her; the children's voices came along the beach, softened by distance; some boatmen on the rocks were seeking for bait, and talking across the pools, but she heard nothing. Then a voice, close behind her, said, "Cecile!" and she heard that, and started, her heart giving a great bound, but all power of motion gone from the rest of her body.

"Don't look round, Cecile, guess who it is!" A pair of hands covered her eyes. "Once—twice—thrice! Do you give up? Then you must look. Oh! Cecile, my own, my love, my darling! when shall I have looked enough at you?"

"Norman!" she said, looking up at the blue eyes, so tender and so true, and the face—now browner by many shades—and the familiar dark curls.

"And to think of all you have gone through, and I never knew—I, who would have laid down my life to save you from one hour of pain! But it is all over now, Cecile; you have me to take care of you, you know. You can trust me for that, can't you?"

He sat beside her on the sand. They had it all to themselves, for it was the universal dinner-hour at Dulcombe-by-the-Sea, and all the nurses and children and mothers and bathers had gone home. They had so much to talk about; and, strange to say, the only question that Norman did not think of asking

was one that might have been of paramount importance to a lover just returned from a long voyage, who had never been told, before or since, whether his affection was returned; or, assuming that it had been returned before his departure, whether his lady-love had been constant during his absence? They understood and trusted each other too well.

"Then you were not drowned?" asked Cecile, all at once remembering the anxiety of two months ago. "And how do you happen to have come so soon?"

"That is all the same story, Cecile," he said, gravely; "it was a near thing with me. I will tell you all the whole long story another day. We were run down off Antigua by an American ship, and the poor old *Oisirs* went to the bottom—they hope to fish her up in time. We lost none of the crew, thank Heaven! I came home in a merchantman, and am waiting for another ship; meantime I am going to be married."

"But Norman, how can I? There is Lady Churchill—and if you go away again we might as well not be married at all!"

"You are most certainly not going back to any Lady Churchill's," said Norman. "Of course it is hard that I must leave you; but, you, see, I cannot give up my profession. But then I can take you from all your drudgery, and you will know that you have somebody to stand up for you, and care for you. I forgot to tell you that my godfather died and left me three thousand pounds; that, with my pay and the little I had before, will keep you pretty comfortably, Cecile; not as I should wish to keep you, my darling, but it will be better than what has been going on all this time. And good times will come. I may get prize-money and promotion. Are you happy, Cecile? are you content?"

There was a long silence as they sat hand-in-hand by the sea. Cecile thought she must die of so much happiness.

"Don't you wonder how I found you out?" he said. "It was really like a detective's work. I went to Ashthorpe, heard all about everything, my poor sweet one, from Aunt Mary, and got your London address; went to Beaconsfield-street, saw your father, declared my intentions—as people say—in the most honourable manner; followed you here, and now we *could*, sitting beside you only a day and a-half after landing. I have such a collection of curiosities for you, though I lost half in the *Oisirs*. You will find many advantages in marrying a sailor—though perhaps they scarcely counterbalance the disadvantages. And look here!"

He pulled out of his pocket a stiff, shapeless thing, something like a dried fungus. Then Cecile recognized the glove she gave him on Ashthorpe rocks.

She smiled, then looked sad, saying,—

"Poor little Dash!"

"Ah! there is so much that we cannot replace, I know. But you will have new pets and grow fond of them. I have brought you a monkey for a beginning; you always used to say that you wanted me to bring you one."

"Oh, how charming! I hope I shan't be afraid of it. But what will mother say? Norman, how selfish I am! I quite forgot all about her. She will think I am drowned."

"She knows all about it. I went to the house first, you little goose, or how should I have found you? But we might go to her now. Dear, don't you wish this morning would last for ever?"

It seemed to last for a week, at any rate, for day followed day in an unbroken chain of happiness; sunny mornings on the beach, lazy afternoons in the verandah; an early tea, because of the shortening days; then a long stroll through the "happy autumn fields," where the yellow sheaves were standing; along the lanes in the soft shadow of the hedges; then the long lines of down and the golden plain of the sea, where—

"Many an evening by the waters did we watch the stately ships,
And our spirits rushed together at the touching of the lips."

Mrs. King was happy in her daughter's happiness; if she sometimes thought regretfully of what might have been, she kept her regrets locked within her bosom. "Not the match she might have made!" But then it was so much better than governing; and it was very nice to think that she would not lose the daughter, whom she had missed so all this time. They would go to a nicer house; and now that things seemed to be on the mend, no doubt they would go on improving.

Then some terrible news came, that cast a shadow over Cecile's happiness; shocked Norman, and filled Mrs. King with horror.

She was sitting alone in the little drawing-room, Cecile having gone to bathe, when Norman came in with last night's London paper.

"You have not seen the paper, have you?" he asked. "Such a shocking thing has happened. You knew Lord Armstead, of course?"

"Yes, very well indeed. What has happened?"

"Shot from behind a hedge by those skulking Irish rascals; killed on the spot! Here it is—would you like to read it?"

She took the paper, but the type swam before her eyes. It was only another repetition of the terrible story, so often told: Lord Armstead had found his tenantry in rebellion, his house, occupied by the agent, in a state of siege. No rents had been paid for three years, though many of the tenants were perfectly able to pay. One man had resisted popular opinion, paid his rent, and been murdered. Reductions had been made; there were no exorbitant demands; but Lord Armstead was an earl, a landlord, and an absentee, therefore, fair game. Rents had been asked for, and evictions made, in his name; so his life was declared forfeit, and one more "Agrarian murder" was added to the list.

"Keep it from Cecile," said Mrs. King; "or tell her very cautiously. They were great friends, and she will be very much distressed."

So Norman told her, when he met her on the beach, and after her first dumb paralysis of horror, she cried as if all the fountains of her tears were broken up for the the man who had loved her with such a tender, patient, chivalrous love, and who had gone to his death at her instigation.

It was not in human nature to feel no jealousy of such a burst of sorrow.

As her tears subsided she began to notice that Norman was very quiet, and looked grave and anxious. She thought it unkind, not to her, but to Lord Armstead, that he should not grieve, too, and she said,—

"Oh! Norman, he was so good, so kind. I have not told you yet how good he was to me when I had nobody else. I thought he would not like me to tell; but now he is dead, and it cannot matter. And I hurt him; I disappointed him; I was cruel and ungrateful, and sent him away. I made him go to Ireland; and he went, and they have killed him—and it is all my fault!"

"I suppose you mean that he asked you to marry him?"

Cecile was chilled and frightened by the cold, suppressed voice.

"Dear, it was not my fault," she said, pleading for herself now, though she had just been accusing herself. "I was so surprised. He was so old. I had no idea. I had not known him very long. It was before we left Ashthorpe, and then again just before he went to Ireland."

"And why didn't you take him?" asked Norman, still in his hard voice.

"Why, how could I?" she asked, simply. "I liked you best!"

"And you refused an earl twice over for me; and I was far away, and might—. No, no!" he cried, holding her to him passionately. "You knew better than that. You knew you could trust me!"

Cecile's tears were dried for the time; but she could not lightly forget that tragic story, in which she had had so close a share. And

she told Norman everything that had taken place between her and Lord Armstead, and his little cloud of jealousy vanished into the azure depths of his trust and love; and he, too, loved the memory of the man who had been so noble and so true, and did not grudge him Cecile's tears and tender gratitude.

Then Mr. King complained of his loneliness and discomfort; and they went back to Beaconsfield-street, and Cecile wondered how she could have thought it such a dreary, ugly place!

Norman hovered between her and the Admiralty Office, and at last came with the news that he was appointed to the *Sapphire*, and they must be married at once, or there would be no time for a honeymoon trip.

Cecile had written to Lady Churchill, and received a kind, congratulatory letter, accompanied by a pair of peacock feather screens. She, too, was greatly shocked at Lord Armstead's death.

She was more relieved than sorry to lose Cecile. It was very awkward, after all, having a pretty girl like that in the house to rival her daughters, and who could not be buried out of sight, but must be treated upon an equality. So she engaged a grim, elderly dragon of a governess, armed to the teeth with certificates and accomplishments, who kept strict discipline in the schoolroom, and certainly never dreamed of attracting the attention of eligible noblemen.

Then came a last surprise—a crowning surprise—that took away for ever the few shadows remaining on Cecile's horizon; and, if possible, made her love more tenderly than ever the memory of her murdered lover.

She had read all the details of Lord Armstead's stately funeral in the county paper sent to her by Mrs. Leigh, and she knew that Captain Aylmer, his cousin, had succeeded to the title and estates.

The new countess was very delicate, and obliged to live abroad or in the south of England. It was so sad to think that Armstead Castle must be closed again; that the artistic beauty that had so skilfully called it into living beauty and splendour was closed in death; and that after his wild, roaming life, the lord of the mansion should not find a rest in the home of his race, excepting in the dark, narrow vault of the church.

"And it might all have been yours, Cecile!" Mrs. King would sigh.

"Dear mother! think of the pain I have been spared. Would you have me a poor, lonely widow at eighteen?"

"You would not have been a widow; for if he had married you he would not have gone off to Ireland in that reckless way. You would have saved his life!"

"No! It was his duty to go; and I would not have held him back. I should have gone with him—and perhaps been shot, too!"

Cecile was sitting alone, busy with her bridal preparations, when a visitor arrived, and was announced as "Lord Armstead." The name was such a shock that she could not rise to receive the slight, brown-eyed young man who came into the room. He saw her pallor and startled expression, and guessed the cause—distressed at his stupidity in not having provided against alarming her, by introducing himself as Captain Aylmer.

He apologized so gently and kindly, that she felt friendly and at home with him at once.

"I was anxious to make your acquaintance," he said. "First, because I understand that you were such a very dear friend to poor Armstead's; and secondly, because we shall probably be thrown together in the way of business."

Then seeing her puzzled face, he said—"Are you not aware of the circumstances—have you not been informed yet? Then you will hear from our lawyers by the next post. There must have been some unexpected delay. I am truly glad to be the bearer of good news. My cousin has left you the whole of his property—as much as did not go with the entail—deducting a few legacies to old servants,

and soon. When it is realized you will find that you have an income of nearly three thousand a-year!"

So poverty and privation and anxiety for the future were all of the past—the winter of discontent made glorious by the summer sun of a deathless love.

Then Norman and Cecile were quietly married in a bright, little church, recently built to meet the wants of the new and growing district. It was all decorated for a harvest-thanksgiving, with fairy-like arches of dropping golden oats and feathery barley, wreathed with richly-hued autumn flowers—dahlias, gladioli, and star-like asters. Over altar and arch, along the walls and round the organ, the poem of thanksgiving ran—in flowers and corn—"We thank Thee, we praise Thee"—"Rejoice"—"Give Thanks." And down in two happy, loving hearts the sweet hymn echoed, to make music in their lives until they join in the last triumphant hymn of creation.

"I should so like to see Ashthorpe again," said Cecile, one day, as they walked beside Ulleswater. "Do you think there will be time, dear, before you go?"

"Plenty—we need not stay more than two days. They will be delighted to have us at the Rectory. I have been wishing for it all this time; but I thought it might pain you to go, so I said nothing about it."

So, on a golden October afternoon, Norman and Cecile were sitting once more on the rocks where they first saw them fifteen months ago. These months have been longer than fifteen years of the life they lived before, and have left their impress on both. Norman is browner, broader, and more manly, but his boyish mirthfulness and frank manner are unchanged. Cecile is very nearly her old self again—bright, and full of life and spirits, but time has been less kind to her than to her young husband. She is not the careless, merry child she used to be, though it is difficult to realize that she is a matron of a fortnight's standing, as she laughs and sends the Rector's big dog into the sea, just as she sent little Daub.

"Is it not like the picnic day, Norman? And here you are, going off again and leaving me behind. Do you remember it all?"

She was asking the question for the fiftieth time that afternoon—it was such a pleasure to be answered.

"You did not kiss me that day!" she said. "Did you ever think about me after you left us? Do you remember when I said I would read it all up? I never once opened a book about the West Indies!"

"I used to go over it all when I was keeping watch. I often laughed, when there was no one to see but the man in the moon, to think how you imagined Peru was in the West Indies. Did you teach your pupils that? Little wretches! I hate to think of them, and all the worry you had!"

"They were very nice—I often think of Evelyn and Muriel. I shall be so glad to see them again! I was such a silly, frivolous girl before I knew them, Norman; I liked nothing but being petted, and having my own way! But they were happy days, though they must have been very empty and unsatisfactory, really! Not so happy as the days to come, though! Oh! Norman, why can't we stay here for ever?—why must you go?"

He kissed her very tenderly. "Sweetheart, you know you would not have me to stay; and it is a very different going away from the last."

"Yes, yes; you know how happy I am going to be! Has not everything turned out wonderfully and beautifully? I never really cared for Ashthorpe, and, when we saw it to-day, I wondered how I could have called such a formal, dreary place home! I like our new home far better. How pleased poor mamma looked when we took her to see it; and now she is comfortably installed, and ready to receive us. Norwood is so convenient for papa, too, and the garden can be made most lovely

by the spring. I am glad we may call it Ashthorpe, for it makes it feel like an old friend. The drawing-room will be so pretty with all dear Lord Armstead's curiosities and artistic odds-and-ends. And your portrait will soon be finished and hanging up in my room, and what red-letter days mail-days will be!"

"And you don't regret Armstead, dearest? No, I know you don't, but I like to see the look in your eyes when I ask you. How sad and lonely it looked to-day! I wish the new lord would come to live there."

"See! here is C. A. K. that you cut on the rock; it has lasted longer than C. A. K. has done. You must cut C. A. L. to-day, and N. L., and a true lover's knot. There will just be time before the tide is up!"

"By-the-by, Cecile," said Norman, as he dug his knife into the rock. "I have found out Hero. Mr. Hay bought her, and is ready to let you have her back again at once. He was more than kind about it. I met him this morning, and told him that you were anxious to buy her if you could."

"Oh, Norman! how charming to think that I shall ride her again! It is like a fairy story; I get everything I wish for. I shall begin to wish at once for an admiral's hat and epaulettes for you, and a very large retiring pension!"

"And what for yourself?"

"That is for myself; for it means that you are to come home, and be with me always. It is horrid to marry a sailor—I always felt sorry for girls who married sailors. How I used to cry when I sang 'Auld Robin Gray' the first time you went away!"

"But Jeanie did not marry the sailor—she only wished she had done so, poor girl! I am glad you had less confidence in casualty rumours."

"It was very like our story," said Cecile, thoughtfully. "I always felt sorry for Jeanie, but so angry with her for not waiting a little longer. I am so glad—so glad, love, that our story has ended in the right way!"

[THE END.]

PAY AS YOU GO.—This advice is always good, but it is specially timely, now that the prospect ahead for work or business looks encouraging, and everybody feels cheerful. How many times have you said to yourself during the past few years, "If I could only get my bills squared up, I never would be caught in this way again," and you have fussed and worried over debts, contracted when times were flush and the prospect of paying them seemed fair. Now is a good time to turn over a new leaf, because it is just the time when the temptation to do the same thing again is strong upon you. If your wages are increased or you are selling more goods and getting a better profit, you begin to think "now I can buy that new carpet or chamber set that my wife wants and can pay for it in a short time." You had better wait until you have paid up all the old debts first. Don't get trusted. Pay for your provisions and groceries as you go along and husband what you have over. The relief from the old debts will be like the recovery from a boil—you feel better when it is well—and the comfort of feeling that the little pile you accumulate is subject to nobody's lien, is a positive pleasure. Flush times almost invariably lead to speculation, and speculation includes not only the investment in stocks or lands for a rise, but the discounting of the future for anything that you want. The man who buys what he is unable to pay for at the time of the purchase, is mortgaging his life and his labour, and incurring a burden which most likely he will regret. "Pay as you go" is a wise maxim, for yourself honest, and for your neighbour just. Its observance will lighten the cares and burdens of life, sweeten toil, encourage industry, reward honesty, promote good neighbourhood and induce prosperity.

FORGIVEN.

As she went by, Mrs. Roseleigh shot him a luminous glance from under the pink shadow of her parasol, and just touched the snowy tips of her fingers to her lips.

A moment before, Cecil Fane had vowed he would be fooled and beguiled by this woman no longer. Now, in an instant, all his good resolutions vanished.

He sprang to his feet, caught up the portfolio of drawings with which he had been pretending to occupy himself, and followed her, with a long, swinging stride that took him over the ground to her side, before the smile, which had succeeded the frown on her mocking lips, had had time to die from them.

"What did you do that for?" he demanded, audaciously capturing the hand that had waited the sweet salute, and holding it fast in his.

Ella Roseleigh laughed musically.

"Shall I tell you truly? I wanted to see if I could get you to tear yourself away from that drawing you appeared to be so busy on."

"Did you come out here to look for me?"

Mrs. Roseleigh pulled her hand away from him.

"Oh, of course!" she said, sarcastically.

"I believe you did," he persisted, looking down admiringly at the brilliant, laughing face upraised to his. Come, Ella, what do you mean by playing fast-and-loose with me in this way? Don't you know I am engaged to a good, honest, true-hearted little girl, worth a dozen of you?"

"Money value," said the widow, putting up a glittering, jewelled hand, and pretending to hide a yawn. "When are you going to be married?"

Cecil Fane bit his lip, and his brow clouded.

"Perhaps never!" he said, almost savagely.

"Really?" said Mrs. Roseleigh. "I thought the marriage was a foregone conclusion."

"It would be, if it were not for you."

"For me?" arching her eyebrows. "What have I got to do with it?"

"Everything, and you know it!"

"Well, really—" she began, with a slightly-offended air.

But Cecil had stopped right there in the roadway, and caught her hand again in both his.

"Look here, now, Ella," he spoke swiftly and hotly, "you can't pretend to deny that you know, and have known for a long time, that I love you. You have tried your best to keep me from exactly telling you so, but you knew it all the same, and let things go on. Now, are you going to marry me or not?"

All the time that this torrent of words was being poured forth, Mrs. Roseleigh was struggling to disengage her hand, and glancing with frightened eyes in every direction.

"Good heavens!" she thought, "how excited the man was, and what if somebody should see them!"

"Mr. Fane," she said at last, angrily, "will you be kind enough to let go of my hand?"

He released it instantly, and Mrs. Roseleigh, with a haughty bow, turned and began to retrace her steps toward the hotel.

Cecil followed her quickly, his face very pale.

"Have I offended you?" he asked, anxiously, as he gained her side again. "I beg you to forgive me."

The widow looked straight before her, an ominous glitter in the dark-blue eyes, her lips compressed. She did not speak.

"Have you been playing with me all this time?" Cecil asked, bitterly. "We shall be at the turning soon, and in full view of the hotel. Mrs. Roseleigh, will you not stop and talk with me a few moments? I should like to have this thing out now."

"How dare he speak that way to me?" Ella Roseleigh said to herself, trembling; but she did not dare to go on, for fear this impetuous fellow should do something rash in

sight of people. She stood still, her head thrown back, her flashing eyes uplifted to his face.

"Well," she said.

"Have you been playing with me all this time? Answer me."

"I might with much better reason ask that question of you," she said, coldly. "You told me yourself that you were engaged to be married; you have often reminded me of it. How, then, could I dream of any harm coming to you from our acquaintance?"

"You do not love me then?"

"Do you suppose if I did, I would acknowledge it to a man who is promised to another woman?"

"But," Cecil explained, eagerly, "you know this is not like a common engagement. Isabel Stanley and I have only yielded a passive assent to an arrangement we had nothing to do with making. We have always considered ourselves engaged, it is true, and it is an understanding in the family that we shall marry. But not a word of love has ever passed between us."

Mrs. Roseleigh shrugged her graceful shoulders slightly.

"That has nothing to do with it, and does not at all lessen the impropriety of your speaking of love to any other woman, while you are the promised husband of Miss Stanley."

Cecil Fane did not speak for a moment. Standing there, with the setting sun for a background to his tall, handsome figure, he seemed to study the beautiful, chill face before him keenly. Then he said, quietly, and in a very different tone from his former one,—

"Shall we return to the hotel now, Mrs. Roseleigh?"

The widow bent her head, and they walked slowly back, in almost utter silence.

Once or twice Mrs. Roseleigh stole a look at her silent escort, and wondered to herself, "will he do it?"

But their eyes did not meet, and they parted at the porch, she to join some ladies who were chatting there, he to go to his room and dash off a letter to Isabel Stanley, in which he relinquished all claim to her hand, and surrendered all right and title to any share in the large property left the two by a deceased uncle, on condition of their marrying—the one who declined to fulfil the conditions to forfeit his or her share to the other.

He could not get an answer under three days, and resolved that he would not speak again to Mrs. Roseleigh till he had heard.

He spent the most of his time in his room, or in the country about, sketching, carefully avoiding the hotel people, lest he should meet Mrs. Roseleigh, which he felt he could not bear to do under present circumstances.

Let him once hear from Miss Stanley, and be able to say to his enchantress that he was free to woo her, and he would know how he stood with her.

The time went by very slowly. He did not once catch a glimpse of Mrs. Roseleigh. Perhaps she was avoiding him as much as he was her.

He was at the office when the letter came from Miss Stanley, and, going back to his room with it in his hand, found his mother there.

She had come in the same train that had brought his answer from Miss Stanley.

Mrs. Fane wore an extraordinary air of excitement and anxiety.

"Have you heard from Isabel lately?" she asked, as soon as they had exchanged greetings.

"Yes," he answered, looking somewhat confused. "I have a letter here from her."

"Oh!" ejaculated his mother, with a look of relief. "Do you know a widow here of the name of Roseleigh—a very handsome woman?" was the next query.

"Yes," flushing.

"You do? What do you know of her? I do hope, Cecil, she has not succeeded in what

she came here for—in entangling you in a flirtation with her?"

There was a look in her son's face that made Mrs. Fane go on, without waiting for him to reply.

By the merest accident, I have heard, through a discharged maid of Miss Stanley's, that she and Mrs. Roseleigh, who are intimate friends, some time ago made an agreement that Mrs. Roseleigh should come here, get acquainted with you, and see if she could not make you fall in love with her, so that you should be the one to decline to fulfil the conditions by which you and Isabel are to share your uncle's wealth."

Mrs. Fane paused.

Cecil had grown so white that he frightened her.

So that was the secret of the charming widow's interest in himself, he was thinking. There had always been something about her that puzzled him, but the puzzle had only increased the fascination she had for him. She was so different from other women. The thought of her now came over him like a spell.

"Have I come too late?" Mrs. Fane asked, in sudden alarm.

"To prevent my falling in love with Mrs. Roseleigh? Yes. I wrote three days ago to Isabel, and this letter is her answer, accepting my renunciation of her and the property."

"Oh, Cecil!—and Mrs. Roseleigh has as good as nothing, only barely enough to keep her. How in the world she manages to go about in the style she does—"

"Don't, mother! I don't care what she has or has not. She has made a fool of me, and that is what no man can stand."

"And you have really given up Isabel and all your uncle's money?"

"Oh, bother Isabel and my uncle's money! I don't want either. Excuse me, mother, but that is the truth."

That evening, Cecil Fane went down into the dining-room for the first time since the night he had parted from Mrs. Roseleigh at the door of the hotel.

There, to his deep chagrin and amazement, he learned that the beautiful widow had gone away on the following morning, without telling any one of her destination.

"I should like to have seen her once more," he thought, bitterly, "just to let her know what I think of her."

Cecil Fane was an artist, and as such had achieved some success.

Some months after his parting from Mrs. Roseleigh, he was out on a sketching tour in the Lakes, and stopping for a few days at a house somewhat frequented by tourists.

As he stood at his window, watching the unloading of the coach which had stopped for dinner, he saw once more the beautiful face of the woman who had "made a fool of him," as he said to his mother.

Ella Roseleigh was just entering the house when she saw him, and a sudden pallor swept her face.

Hastily pulling her travelling veil over her face, she retraced her steps, and told the driver she would walk on, instead of having dinner, and he could pick her up on the road.

"Now, if he has not seen me, I am all right," she thought, as she hurried on.

Cecil, watching her from his window, pressed his lips close, and his dark eyes flashed.

"She shall not escape me this time," he said, clenching his teeth as he hastily quit the room, and ran lightly down the stairs.

"Coming to dinner, Fane?" called a friend, as he went through the hall.

Cecil muttered something and hurried on.

Mrs. Roseleigh, never dreaming that she was followed, did not once look round or pause till she reached the shelter of a cluster of trees some distance away, where she sank down upon the grass and loosened her hat.

"That was a narrow escape," she said, aloud. "I would not have met him for all Isabel Stanley's money."

Like an echo of her words, a low laugh sounded near.

Cecil had come up noiselessly on the soft turf, and had heard her.

Mrs. Roseleigh turned and saw him, and grew white again as she had at the hotel door.

She tried to rise, to speak, to smile in the old audacious way, but she could not, and, sinking back, buried her pallid face in her hands. Cecil could see that she was trembling. He was not prepared to find her like this. His breath came quick as he knelt down in the short grass beside her.

"I see you are aware that I know all," he said, a tremour in his voice despite the bold raillery of his words. "I am glad to find that you are ashamed of yourself, as you ought to be."

Mrs. Roseleigh's hands dropped from her face like a flash. Her cheeks reddened, her eyes shone with an angry light as she essayed once more to rise.

But, as another time—how well she remembered it!—Cecil caught her hands in a vice-like grasp. Besides, he was kneeling partly on her outspread dress. The situation was too absurd. Their eyes met; both laughed.

"You are as impertinent as ever," she said.

"And as determined," he answered. "Ella, that was a cruel trick you played me—y-u and Isabel. Are you ready now to make it right?"

"How?"

"You know."

She evaded his glance; but she could not keep back the beautiful rosy tide that flooded her face in spite of her, and made her ten times lovelier in his eyes than she had ever been.

"Ella, if you will promise to be my wife, I will forgive you everything."

"How do you know I want forgiving?"

"I know you need it."

"Well," after a pause, "I do want it. Wait a minute, Cecil."

He kissed her hands ecstatically for calling him that.

"I was dreadfully ashamed of that performance. That was the reason I ran away; but I got the worst of it. I believe I was more in love with you all the while, than you were with me."

R. F. G.

ANYTHING that makes the heart deeper, anything that makes the current of affection run fuller, anything that makes gratitude, and love, and honour, and truth and faith stronger, makes the man stronger.

THE STREETS OF VENICE.—Many persons are under a great misapprehension as to the means of transit or locomotion in Venice. It is a mistake to suppose that there are no streets, and that it is absolutely necessary to go from place to place by gondola. It is true that three bridges—the Rialto bridge of the Middle Ages, and two modern iron bridges—span the Grand Canal which divides the city in equal halves; it is true that the city is built upon one hundred and seventeen islands, intersected by one hundred and fifty small canals and two thousand, four hundred and eighty passages; but almost every one of the water streets have a quay or footpath bordering it, while four hundred bridges unite island to island, so that it is quite possible to go to every part of the city on foot, although few perhaps would care to do so, for there is not, in all the world, a more difficult place for the traveller, guided only by the "light of nature," to find a given spot. That spot may be only a few hundred yards away, but to reach it he may have to cross half-a-dozen bridges, some leading to the right, and some to the left, and traverse as many squares, of which there are three hundred and ninety-six, one hundred and twenty-seven larger squares, and two hundred and sixty-nine smaller squares.

THE BITER BIT.

Through the illusive glitter of the warm, golden June moonlight, the last impression that Lillian Byrne received was that of a tall, graceful figure vanishing through the dusky gloom while his good-night words lingered pleasantly with her.

"Remember, Lil, if you are not at the picnic to-morrow, I shall not care a fig for the whole affair. Don't forget that you have promised me that you will be there."

"I am not in love with him," Lillian said to herself, as, returning to the parlour, she sat down in the tender dusk, letting the curls droop over one slender hand that supported her head as she mused and dreamed. "Of course I am not in love with him," she thought, feeling the warm blood flush to her very temples at the word. "I have only known him a month. I wonder if he really cares so much whether or not I go to the picnic?"

She was a sweet little girl, with bright, fair hair, and heavenly blue eyes, and Charlie Fitzgerald, the handsome young engineer, who had come to Southbridge to attend to putting in the machinery in the great mills recently erected, thought her the loveliest creature he had ever seen in his life, and particularly this evening, as he went homeward towards the picturesque old farmhouse where he was temporarily living, and whose major-domo was Mrs. Margaret Russell.

Margaret Russell and Lillian Byrne were both women, but there all analogy ceased. Lillian was seventeen, Margaret was forty; Lillian was fresh, fair, and a maiden—Margaret faded, and a widow.

"A delightful evening, Mr. Fitzgerald," Mrs. Russell gaily said, as he came up the steps.

"Yes," he assented.

And then Mrs. Russell edged herself a little to one side.

"Won't you sit down, and enjoy the moonlight a little while?" she asked, persuasively. "Thanks!" he said. "I am in a hurry."

And rather dissatisfied with the indifferent success of her attempt at sociability, Mrs. Russell turned to another of her lodgers, who was sitting inside the window.

"I suppose he prefers a cigar in his own room to the society of ladies," she remarked.

"But maybe he is in a hurry to go and see Lillian. They say he is making up to her."

"Lillian!" echoed Mrs. Russell, scornfully. "Why, she is a mere child, with yellow hair and great, big blue eyes! Nobody could see anything in her to admire."

"Well, you know there is no accounting for tastes. What I say is only what I heard, and I have heard that they are engaged, or next door to it."

"I don't believe a word of it!" Mrs. Russell said, energetically.

"That is as you please."

But whether or not Mrs. Russell believed the rumour, the tidings annoyed her; and when Mr. Fitzgerald had gone out later, she went upstairs, ostensibly in her character of lodging-house keeper, to see that Mr. Fitzgerald was well supplied with towels and fresh water, but really to look about a little.

She never expected the good fortune that befell her. She had thought it just possible that Mr. Fitzgerald might have written or received a love-letter, and possibly laid the torn fragments conveniently in his waste basket.

But it was not scraps—it was an open letter—yes, actually an open letter on the table, the envelope addressed to Mr. C. Fitzgerald, and the sheet beginning "My dear Charlie—my dearest husband!"

As if every muscle in her body was suddenly changed to iron, Mrs. Russell became straight and rigid in an instant.

"Oh, my!" she gasped. "Don't let me judge my fellow-creatures too rashly. Let me look at the signature. Oh, dear! oh, my gracious!

if it actually isn't 'Your own loving wife, Bessie!' Oh! how faint it makes me! To think—to think he is a married man! How thankful I am I never encouraged his sinful attentions! Well, Lillian will have her own boldness to thank for this. I always knew that girl would come to harm, with her mouth always on a broad laugh, for nothing in the world but to show her teeth, just because they happen to be white and regular—false teeth like as not. Yes, it's my duty to warn that girl—my painful duty; but Margaret Russell never yet shrank from duty."

Ah, if poor little Lillian's skin had been less like a rose-petal, her eyes less lovely blue, Mrs. Russell certainly would not have taken such fervent pleasure in performing her "painful duty."

Bertha was all dressed for the picnic the next morning, and looking as distractingly pretty as only a blonde can look in pure white muslin, when Mrs. Russell was shown into the room.

"Ah, you look very nice, Lillian; but remember that all flesh is grass."

"Yes, I know it. Did you wish to see me, Mrs. Russell?"

"Yes. Going to the picnic?"

"Yes," Lillian returned, marvellingly.

"I suppose Mr. Fitzgerald is to be there?"

"I—I believe so."

"Then don't you go."

"Why not?" Lillian asked, arranging the hyacinth bells in a rich, blue cluster for the waist of her dress.

Mrs. Russell closely watched the slowly-crimsoning cheeks.

"People say he is sweet on you, Lillian."

"Well, then, people had better mind their own business," Lillian flashed back.

"Lillian," Mrs. Russell went on, "I have come to warn you. Beware of that man—beware of him!"

"What do you mean?"

"Just this—Mr. Fitzgerald is a married man?"

"What utter nonsense!" Lillian cried, angrily and incredulously.

"It is not nonsense, and I know it," Mrs. Russell said, "I have seen a letter from his wife—do you hear that, Lillian Byrne?—from his wife, written to him!"

"Did he show it to you?"

Slightly discomfited, Mrs. Russell was yet not to be routed.

"No matter about that. It is enough that I saw the letter. And, Lillian, as it is my duty to warn you, so it is your duty, and the duty of all young people like you and me, to punish his falsehood and deceit."

"Mr. Fitzgerald is nothing to me," Lillian said. "Good-morning, Mrs. Russell! Please excuse me; I am rather in a hurry."

And when Mrs. Russell was gone, she looked her door and sat down and cried until her sweet face looked like a drenched flower.

"And I thought he was so true, so grand, so good!" she sobbed. "Oh, how could he—how could he deceive me so wickedly?"

Miss Byrne was not at the picnic that day, and Charlie searched about the grounds until it was too late for any possibility for her arrival, and then went to see what had changed her resolution of the night before, and found her looking very cold, and white, and lovely as she sat alone in the garden.

"Lillian!" he exclaimed, reproachfully, "you promised me faithfully you would be at the picnic, and I find you here! Why did you—"

"My name is Byrne!" she said, haughtily. Charlie bit his lip.

"Miss Byrne, if it pleases you better," he said, with a half smile at what he believed to be a display of girlish dignity, "why did you deceive me so?"

"Why have I deceived you?" Lillian flashed.

"Why have you deceived me?"

"I don't understand what you mean!"

"It strikes me you are remarkably difficult of comprehension this afternoon! However, I will put the question to you as plainly as pos-

sible, Mr. Fitzgerald. Why have you never spoken to me about your wife?"

"For a very good reason! I wouldn't be apt to speak about what I haven't got!"

"You are telling me a deliberate falsehood! You are a married man, and you have been playing a treacherous part all this while!"

"A married man!" he said, his voice thrilling with incredulosity. "You are talking in conundrums! I am not a married man, and I have been playing no treacherous part—to you, least of all, Lillian, my little golden-haired darling!"

And then what did Lillian do but begin to cry in the most undignified fashion.

"Then what did Mrs. Russell mean?" she demanded.

Fitzgerald set his lips tightly together.

"Ah! Mrs. Russell has been talking, has she? What did she say?"

"That you were married!"

"She must have gone crazy between spite and ill-nature!" Fitzgerald exclaimed, angrily, "I shall not allow her tongue to wag after this fashion! Lillian, will you walk down there with me? It is not at all warm, and besides, we can keep in the shade nearly all the way."

As a consequence of this invitation, Mrs. Russell was considerably startled by the appearance of Mr. Fitzgerald and Miss Byrne, as she sat darning the household linen in the dining-room, and secretly bewailing that no one had invited her to the picnic.

"Mrs. Russell," Fitzgerald said, abruptly, as she entered her room, "what is this story that you have been telling Miss Byrne about me?"

"I told Miss Byrne no story; I told her only the truth."

"What is the truth, then? Suppose you tell me?"

"That you're a married man—a villain—a deceiver! There, now!"

"Yes? Show your proof, if you please!" Fitzgerald requested, calmly.

"I can do it. A letter from your own wife upstairs, in your own room on your table."

"A letter directed to me?"

"A letter directed to Mr. C. Fitzgerald."

And then Mr. Fitzgerald laughed heartily, while his lip curled with a sneering expression.

"Exactly; but there are more Fitzgeralds than one in the world; for instance, my twin brother Charlton, to whom that letter was written by his own wife. Possibly, if you had taken the trouble to read the whole, instead of a part of what was not intended for your eyes, you would have seen that the letter was sent on for me to read, solely because my sister-in-law, 'Bessie,' alludes playfully in its pages to the loss of Charles's heart to this young lady at my side. I will show you the letter, Lillian."

"But I would not read it," she said, lifting her adorning blue eyes to his face; "I don't deserve to read it. How could I be so wicked as to believe a syllable against you?"

"As for you, Mrs. Russell," Fitzgerald went on, "I can only recommend to you to follow out hereafter what might have been called the 'Diamond Rule'—mind your own business!"

After all Lillian went to the picnic, and in Mr. Fitzgerald's trap, and, best of all, far and away, as his betrothed wife.

E. C.

TEA AS AN INTOXICANT.—The term "tea-drunkard" is known throughout Russia, and implies, not the abuse of *robur* or any spirit distilled from the herb, but that the cup which cheers intoxicates also, if zealously adhered to. Strong tea is well-known to be a powerful, though fleeting, excitant of the nervous system; and if the reader likes to make the experiment let him drink a dozen or fifteen cups of tea in the Russian style—that is, without cream or sugar, but flavoured with a drop of lemon-juice—in the space of a couple of hours, and he may arrive at the conclusion that there is something rational about such an epithet as tea-drunkard, after all.

FACETIE.

A MAN calls his dog "Quinine," because the animal's bark is very bitter.

ECONOMY is the mother of riches, sure enough; but she does not have a large family.

It ought to be easier to hit the head of a nail than it is to strike your thumb, but such is not the case.

A NOBLEMAN of questionable veracity told a fellow-peer one day that he had drunk six bottles of champagne. "That is more than I can swallow," remarked his lordship.

AFTER SUPPER AFTER A BALL.—Hos: "Without joking, Elsie, I adore you. When I look at you there is a commotion in my breast!"—She: "And mine too, Alonzo; I think it must be the lobster salad."

A LADY once asked a friend what would be a good name to give her new pet dog. "Tonic," answered the friend, without a moment's hesitation; "for it is sure to be a mixture of bark, steel, and whine."

IN a shop at the East-end of London, a bill was exhibited in the window recommending a certain patent medicine, with the very dubious heading, "Try one box; no other medicine will ever be taken."

THINKING to stock his depleted larder, a German editor advertised, "Poultry taken in exchange for advertising." The compositor, seeing his opportunity to put up a long-standing grudge, set it up, "Poetry taken, &c." and since that time the office-boy has been clearing five shillings a day from the waste-paper man.

"My wife lost her purse with three pounds in it to-day," said a sad-looking man.—"When going into town or coming home?" asked somebody.—"When? Didn't I tell you she had some money in it?" demanded the sad-looking man, and everybody knew when she lost it.

GLASGOW FOR EVER.—Scene.—Bookbinder's shop during the dinner-hour. Country customer, to apprentice in charge of shop, producing a number of unbound magazines: "I want some o' them books bound, and they must be done cheap so as to doo for a bookcase."—Apprentice who has been a year at the trade: "I'll do that for you. Do you want them done in russia, morocco, or—?"—Country customer, interrupting: "Can you no' get them done in Glasca?" (Glasgow.)

AN Italian organ-grinder recently escaped a fine by a very ingenious excuse. He had been playing before the house of a very irascible old gentleman, who furiously, and with wild gesticulations, ordered him to "move on." The organ-grinder stolidly ground on, and was arrested for his disturbance. At the Police-court the magistrate asked him why he did not leave when requested.—"No spik Inglese," was the reply.—"Well," said the magistrate, "but you must have understood his gestures—his motions."—"I tink he come to dance," was the rejoinder, and the magistrate let the musician go.

RETURNED FROM THE COUNTRY.

It was in a road-car. She had been away for several months, and the children had gone to meet her. They chatted away merrily, while she patted their little heads, and smiled interestedly.

"How's Mary?" she inquired, when they stopped for breath.

"Oh, she's well. She's taking her music lessons all right."

"And Harry?"

"He's going to school. Started last week."

"And papa?"

"He's well too. He's having a splendid time. He said he didn't care if you didn't come back for a year."

The passengers roared.

Grabbing the children with both hands, she rushed for the door, with an "I'll-get-even-with-him-for-this" expression on her face.

A SOCIABLE man is one who, when he has ten minutes to spare, goes and bothers somebody who hasn't.

THEY were at a dinner-party, and he remarked that he supposed she was fond of ethnology. She said she was, but she was not very well, and the doctor had told her not to eat anything but oranges.

"ELLA, is your father at home?" said a bashful lover to his sweetheart. "I want to propose something very important to him."—"No, Clarence, papa is not at home, but I am. Couldn't you propose to me just as well?" And he did, with perfect success.

A GENTLEMAN saw a board with "This cottage for sale" painted on it. Seeing a woman in front of the house, he stopped and asked her very politely when the cottage "would sail."—"Just as soon as the man comes who can raise the wind," was the quiet reply.

I SHOULD so like a coin dated the year of my birth," said a maiden lady of uncertain age to a male acquaintance. "Do you think you could get one for me?"—"I am afraid not," he replied. "These very old coins are only to be found in valuable collections." And yet he cannot see why, when he met the lady the next day, she didn't speak to him.

A LITTLE school-girl asked her teacher what was meant by "Mrs. Grundy."—The teacher replied that it meant "the world." Some days afterwards the teacher asked the geography class, to which this little bud of promise belonged, "What is a zone?"—After some hesitation this girl brightened up and replied—"I know! it's a belt round Mrs. Grundy's waist!"

At a restaurant a customer orders two soft-boiled eggs. The waiter promptly returns with two hard-boiled eggs.—"If you had served these eggs up to a new customer, sir," thunders the guest, "he would have thrown them at your stupid head."—"Yes, sir—I know, sir," replies the waiter, smilingly; "but I wouldn't have done it, sir; I'd have been more careful, sir."

TWO PAIRS OF JOKING BROTHERS.—A ludicrous incident recently took place in Liverpool. There are two brothers who parted many years ago when boys—one of them going to America to seek his fortune, and the other remaining in Liverpool to make it. They have both been eminently successful in that respect, and not long ago the brother in America determined to visit the brother in England. The time of the visit was settled by correspondence, and the American set sail. The Englishman is a notorious wag, and arranged that an acquaintance should meet the American as his brother and conduct him to the hotel. The American, who was also a great wag, on the trip decided to play exactly the same joke on his brother, asking an acquaintance whom he met on the ship to persecute him for a few hours. The acquaintance entered into the spirit of the joke, and when the vessel arrived at Liverpool was found by the personator of the English brother and driven to the hotel. The real American brother followed more leisurely, chuckling over his joke. In the meanwhile the English brother had also gone to the hotel, bursting with merriment over his joke. It happened that the two real brothers met in the lobby of the hotel, and though they had been parted so many years, they knew each other. At first, with blank amazement they greeted each other; and then, as they explained their mutual jokes, laughed long and heartily. But the climax was yet to be reached. An explanation in regard to the gentlemen who had persecuted them, and who were now, as they imagined, playing a huge joke on each other, showed that they also were brothers who had been separated from boyhood, but who did not know each other when they met. The first pair of brothers hurried up to their sitting-room, and after the situation had been explained all round, the comedy of errors was pleasantly ended by an old-fashioned English dinner.

"Boy, can I go through this gate to the river?" politely inquired a fashionably-dressed lady.—"Yes'm; a load of hay went through this morning," was the urchin's horrid reply.

"I AM speaking," said a long-winded orator, "for the benefit of posterity."—"Yes," said one of his hearers, "and if you keep on much longer, your audience will be here."

BEWARE OF SPRING TRAPS AND GUNS.—Heaven helps those that help themselves, but Heaven help those who help themselves to my apples," is a notice posted in an apple orchard near Southampton.

IN one of the American Courts a lawyer threw an inkstand at another's head. The Court required him to apologize. He did so, and added, "While I am about it, I may as well apologize beforehand for throwing another inkstand at him the first chance I get."

JONES asked his wife: "Why is a husband like dough?" He expected she would give it up, and he was going to tell her it was because a woman needs him; but she said it was because he was hard to get off her hands.

JONES, who is not an Adonis, said to his godson, "You must not cry, my boy; it will make you look ugly later on."—"Then, godfather," replied the youth, "you must have cried a great deal when you were a boy!"

CHEERFUL.—Smith (who had forgetfully left his purse on the piano): "Have you found anything, Angelina?"—Angelina: "Oh yes, dear! Thanks! I have ordered a new music-stool, some lace curtains, and such a love of a bonnet."

A NOBLE lord who had a great antipathy to music was asked why he did not subscribe to a certain series of concerts, it being urged as a reason for his doing so that his brother subscribed.—"Ay," replied his lordship, "if I were as deaf as my brother, I would subscribe too."

A LADY and gentleman consented to assist at the Christmas church decorations, and were anxious for some suitable motto; but, being undecided, the young lady inspired with an idea telegraphed the following to the young gentleman as being the most suitable:—"Unto us this day a child is born. Size 6ft. 4in. by 2ft."

A MAN dies, leaving a number of debts, which his widow is in no hurry to pay. A surviving friend of the deceased remonstrates with her upon her negligence.—"What!" he says, indignantly, "you hesitate about paying this money—about leaving your son an untimely name?"—"Ah! you see," sighs the widow, "my poor, dear husband's name was Smith, and there are so many Smiths, that perhaps nobody would ever know!"

"EXPERT" TREATMENT.—It is said that a French painter one day visited the Salon in Paris in company with a friend who was a member of the committee of selection, and who had been instrumental in procuring the acceptance of the painter's work. When the artist came near his picture, he exclaimed, "Good gracious, you're exhibiting my picture the wrong side up!" "Hush," was the reply—"the committee refused it the other way upwards!"

A FRENCH lady of distinction started in her carriage on New Year's Day on the mission of card-leaving, but soon discovered that she had left behind her her case, containing the necessary paste-boards.—"Antoine," she said to her new footman "return quick! I have forgotten my cards. They are on my table." This order was obeyed, and the visiting round began. Antoine was enjoined to leave two cards at one house, four at another, and so on, according to circumstances. The last house on the list was reached and the faithful footman ordered to leave the next three cards.—"Alas! Madame," he cried, "I have dealt out the whole pack except two—the deuce of hearts and the king of diamonds." Tableau!

SOCIETY.

THE Young Princes of Wales have presented to the Abbot of the Western Honganji one of the great Buddhist Colleges in Tokio, a splendid barometer, in acknowledgment of the hospitality he extended to them during their sojourn in Japan.

THE PRINCESS CHRISTIAN stood godmother in person at St. Michael's Church, Chester-square, recently, to the infant of Mrs. and Lieutenant-Colonel Seymour Corkran, and gave it the names of Christian Algernon Beauchamp, Miss Cecilia Peel, Lord Algernon Gordon Lennox, and Admiral Lord Alcester were the other sponsors. The ceremony was performed by the Rev. Canon Fleming.

PRINCE Alfred of Edinburgh, accompanied by his tutor and the Rector of Eastwell, visited Canterbury Cathedral recently, over which they were shown by the Bishop of Dover and Canon Fremantle. After luncheon, the young Prince and his suite left for Eastwell Park. The Royal children have now taken their departure for the Continent.

It is stated that the desire of the Duke of Albany to obtain administrative work is so great that, failing his appointment to the Governor-Generalship of Canada, he is willing to accept (and may, not improbably, very shortly be offered) the control of one of our more southern colonies. The Cape of Good Hope is, of course, out of the question, owing to the responsibilities and anxieties which are inseparable from it, but in one of the Australian colonies his Royal Highness would meet with a position more suited to him.

THE condition of Turkish ladies is not one to be envied, as it is now stated that even the privilege of witnessing day representations at theatres has been withheld on the ground that it affords too great facilities for the exchange of *billets-doux*; and that it is impossible for the police to exercise adequate surveillance over the conduct of the ladies.

KIND Sir Moses Montefiore treated the 406 inmates of the Isle of Thanet Union to a roast beef and plum-pudding dinner on the Queen's birthday. He also presented the men with tobacco or a silver coin, as they desired; the women with snuff or coin, and the children with oranges and sweets.

THE marriage of Mary Theresa, daughter of the Rev. C. Farre, Principal of Cuddesdon College, and Canon elect of Westminster, and the Rev. C. S. Abraham, only son of Bishop Abraham, formerly Bishop of Wellington, New Zealand, was a very brilliant affair. The bride was attired in ivory white satin, trimmed with broché and Mechlin lace, a veil of Honiton lace over a wreath of orange blossoms; her train was held by her youngest brother in a fanciful suit of olive green velvet. The six bridesmaids were dressed in white Indian silk, with broad sashes of gold, and an appropriate bouquet of golden "furze."

RICHMOND is taking possession of some of the attractions that have their origin and purpose in Twickenham, for a bazaar, exemplifying a Swiss village, to help the completion of a church in the latter place, which was to be held at the Castle Hotel, Richmond, on the 19th, 20th, and 21st inst., the lovely grounds of the Orleans not being obtainable. A list of patronesses, high in fashion's society, stamp it as one of the fashionable events of the season; and Eastern magnificence, in the persons of the Persian Ambassador, Prince Malcom Khan, and his Princess, with their suite in gorgeous attire, as become the children of the sun, will contrast with Swiss simplicity in the band of pretty young maidens in the picturesque costume of Switzerland, who will dispense their wares at just prices, and full value.

STATISTICS.

THE AGES OF ROYALTY.—As Queen Victoria has now completed her sixty-fourth year, having been born at Kensington Palace on May 24th, 1819, the following statement of the ages of various monarchs, ranged from the oldest to the youngest, may prove interesting:—The Emperor of Germany, aged 86; the King of the Netherlands, aged 66; the King of Denmark, aged 65; the Queen of Great Britain and Ireland, aged 64; the King of Wurtemberg, aged 60; the Emperor of Brazil, aged 57; the King of Saxony, aged 55; the King of Sweden and Norway, aged 54; the Emperor of Austria, aged 52; the King of the Belgians, aged 48; the King of Portugal, aged 44; the King of Roumania, aged 44; the Sultan of Turkey, aged 40; the King of Italy, aged 39; the Emperor of Russia, aged 38; the King of Bavaria, aged 37; the King of the Hellenes, aged 37; the King of Serbia, aged 28; and the King of Spain, aged 25.

NATIONAL DEBTS.—The largest national debt in the world is owned by France. It amounts to £1,170,960,000, or £39 10s. for every man, woman and child in the country. Next comes Russia, with £1,078,631,890, the debt *per capita* being considerably less than that of France, but scarcely less burdensome, owing to the poverty-stricken and half-civilized character of the majority of the population. The debt of the German Government is small because of the adherence to a strict policy of taxation whereby the current expenses are annually met; but the national burdens are almost unbearably large notwithstanding, mainly because of the cost of the immense standing army. England owes over seven millions. The people of the United States groan under the weight of a debt of about £425,000,000, with a country possessing the richest certainties of development of any in the world.

GEMS.

THE sister of temperance is not she who stands idle, but she who goes straight forward to the work.

DESOTISM can no more exist in a nation until the liberty of the press be destroyed than the night can happen before the sun is set.

WHOEVER has a contented mind has all riches. To him whose foot is enclosed in a shoe, is it not as though the earth were carpeted with leather?

It is so much pleasanter to have imaginary enemies than to recognize one's own incapacity for any task undertaken, that the delusion is always maintained.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

SAUCE FOR CRABS.—Beat up an ounce or more of butter to a cream, add to it a little mustard, vinegar, salt, pepper, and the raw yolks of a couple of eggs; mix all well together, put it on the fire, and stir until the consistency of mayonnaise sauce.

A DISINFECTIVE "LAUNDRY BLUE."—Mix together sixteen parts of Prussian blue, two parts of carbolic acid, one part of borax, and one part of gum arabic into a stiff dough. Roll it out into balls as large as hazel nuts, and coat them with gelatine or gum, to prevent the carbolic acid from escaping.

POTATO LEAVES.—Potato leaves are very nice when eaten with roast beef or mutton, and are made of any portion of the mashed roots, prepared without milk, by mixing with them a good quantity of very finely minced raw shallot, powdered with pepper and salt; then beating up the whole with a lump of butter to bind it, and dividing it into small loaves of a conical form, and placing them under the meat to brown, that is, when it is so nearly done as to impart some of the gravy along with them.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE PRINCE OF WALES has fixed the 11th of July for the Savage Club *fête* at the Royal Albert Hall in aid of the funds of the Royal College of Music. The programme will comprise a musical and dramatic entertainment (given by members of the club), a tombola, a supper, and a fancy dress and domino ball. There will be numerous "side shows," where individual members will offer attractions. Artists will sketch portraits, the journalists will produce a souvenir newspaper, while entertainers like Mr. Toole, Mr. Lionel Brough, and Mr. George Grossmith will have "wigwags" of their own, where they will receive and amuse their friends.

THERE has been a rumour that St. George's Hospital at Hyde Park-corner is to be removed. This is, however, now authoritatively denied. There would be no gain to traffic were it to disappear, and though its close conjunction to an aristocratic quarter may be considered to detract from the general tone, such high life localities have often most beggarly and unsuitable next-door neighbours. Besides, St. George's Hospital is very useful to the aristocratic world, as its doors are always hospitably open to those whose unrestrained park feats of horsemanship, or rashness as pedestrians, brings them thither, in cabs or on shutters, in a condition requiring quick attention.

HISTORY OF GUNPOWDER.—A writer in the *North China Herald* on the history of gunpowder in China asserts that this explosive was known in the seventh century of our era. The alchemists of the Han dynasty, and subsequently in the fourth and following centuries, worked with saltpetre and sulphur, as well as cinnabar, red oxide of lead, and other common compounds. But in the seventh century we find gunpowder used to make a cracking sound and to afford an agreeable sight to the court of Sui Yang-ti, the emperor of that time. The earliest exhibitions of fireworks mentioned in Chinese history belong to that date. The substances used in the composition of gunpowder are all native to China, and the writer appears to prove conclusively that the Arabs derived the art of firework making, as well as gunpowder, from the Chinese. The discovery once made, the Chinese alchemists, owing to the badness of their hypotheses and the futility of their aims, were slow at improvement. But the doctors of the Arab colonies in China carried to Bagdad the germs of the Chinese discoveries, and there they were elaborated into new forms. In short, in many arts and sciences the Arabs learnt from China, and, assisted by Nestorians, Jews, and Greeks, improved on what they learned. In course of years, cannon, matchlocks, and shells for use in sieges were brought to China from Mohammedan countries. There are faint traces in the eleventh century of rude fire-arms; in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the records of their use in the Chinese wars become frequent and distinct. The Golden Tartars, in their wars with South China in the twelfth century, used cannon which they called "heaven-shaking thunder." In an iron tube was placed powder which was "set fire to, and would burn down half a square *li* of houses and pierce a coat of mail made of iron rings." It is expressly stated that Genghis Khan, the Mongol conqueror, used cannon in his wars. Kubla Khan also used these weapons at a siege celebrated in Chinese history—that of Siang-yang. Hearing, it is said, the sound of the explosion, which shook the sky, and seeing that the balls entered seven feet into the earth, the Chinese defenders of the city capitulated. It is clear that China owed its knowledge of artillery to the Mohammedans. In the fourteenth century commenced the European intercourse with China, which then abandoned the Arabs, and took the Portuguese as teachers in the construction of weapons of warfare.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

ARA.—The 26th of March, 1870, fell on a Saturday.

D. B.—Your friend is right. We are now in the 1893rd year of the Christian era.

LINXIS.—Mount Everest, in Asia, is the highest mountain in the world.

P. L. F.—There is nothing that will reduce the size of the head of a healthy person. Any attempt to compress the head will be likely to cause death or insanity.

D. M. L.—A good grammar and a good work on rhetoric would be of use to you, but you can only learn to write with correctness and elegance by a vast deal of practice as well as study.

F. J.—The expression "Noblesse oblige" is an old French proverb. It means, literally, "Nobility compels," that is, what is called noble birth binds a man to act according to certain standards.

F. W.—Your affianced seems to be unreasonably jealous. The next time you see him give him a good box on the ear, follow it up with an affectionate kiss, and tell him not to make a fool of himself any more.

LEONARD.—The word *gillie* comes from an old Gaelic term that means a boy, or lad, or page. *Gillie* now means a personal attendant who occupies a menial position.

W. J. P.—It is exceedingly unwise and improper for a lady to enter into correspondence under the circumstances which you describe, and some persons think that it is also disreputable.

A. PELL.—The Live Oak is so called on account of its thick evergreen leaves, which retain the greenness all the year round, even when the other oaks look dead and bare.

EDNA.—All you can do is to get an introduction, and then make yourself as agreeable as possible to the young lady. No one can help a sighing swain very much. In love matters a man must act for himself.

M. R. B.—If you are so certain that your love is returned, why not end all question and doubt by asking the young lady to marry you? This is the best and the proper thing to do under the circumstances anyway.

LOTTIE.—A little cold cream rubbed on every night improves and softens some skins. Be careful to avoid exposure to the wind, take exercise and plenty of sleep, and do not use any preparation for the skin except under good medical advice.

ALLA.—The changes in the face of the moon are caused by the changes in the relative positions of the earth, moon, and sun. One-half of the moon is always illuminated, but sometimes the illuminated half is almost completely turned away from the earth.

T. B. S.—A lady may speak first to a gentleman to whom she has previously been properly introduced. There is no more harm in dancing with a gentleman with a red moustache than with one who has none at all or a black one.

ANITA.—When reading an original paper, or a selection from any writer, the paper or book should be held in the hands in a natural manner and the pages turned as required. Otherwise the delivery becomes a recitation, and not a reading.

EMMELINE.—If a reception is to follow, an invitation to a wedding requires an answer, for a hostess needs some idea as to how many guests she has to provide for. The sending of a present is a personal affair, and is not necessitated by the reception of an invitation.

COLBURN.—In such a case the invitation should be addressed to Mr. and Mrs. Smith and family, or to Mr. and Mrs. Smith and Miss Smith. It would be better to send separate invitations. An invitation addressed to Mr. and Mrs. Smith would not include the daughter.

PIER.—You should call upon the young lady's mother at her own house and have a full and perfect understanding with her before doing anything looking to a marriage with the daughter. It would be pusillanimous on your part not to call at the house to see the mother of the lady whom you wish to marry.

W. M.—The better plan would be to get a piano and employ a music teacher. Having the instrument in the house, you would be able to practice at odd times, and thus make more rapid progress. There is nothing to be ashamed of in the fact that you have not had opportunities earlier in life to gratify your musical tastes.

STELLA.—1. See a geography or encyclopedia for the geographical divisions, cities, towns, and boroughs of Ireland. 2. There is a statue of Father Mathew, the temperance advocate, in Cork. We do not know the date of the unveiling. 3. It is impossible to trace proper names.

SELINA V.—You are very weak and foolish to allow such trifling to distract your affection from your husband and children. It can only lead you to misery and dishonour. Cast off the infatuation at once, and return to your tempter all letters or papers he may have had the impertinence to address to you. Make your husband aware of all such attentions.

S. V.—Ormus is a small island at the mouth of the Persian Gulf. In the sixteenth century, when the Portuguese were the great traders with the East, they took possession of this barren little island, and made it the great place of exchange for the products of Europe and Asia. It is to this period of its prosperity that Milton refers.

S. V.—1. Gentlemen do not smoke when driving or walking with ladies, nor on promenades much frequented. 2. Never stare at anyone. It is a rule with no exception. At the morning wedding only bridesmaids, ushers, and relatives remain to witness the departure of the newly-wedded pair.

ESKIZ.—If she is willing to share your lot, and you love each other, it would be better to marry now and begin life in moderate circumstances, than to await the chances of your making a fortune before marrying. The lady's occasional cross letters to you are probably caused by her impatience with your tardy wooing.

ANNE J.—You had better make sure of the state of your feelings towards this young lady whose affection you have won. Probably you love her, but her display of affection for you renders your love less lively and demonstrative. If she should form another attachment, and you should lose her, you might then discover too late how perfectly she is entwined in your heart.

N. R. T.—You had better talk this matter over with your mother. A young girl of fifteen without money or friends connected with the theatre, and without any special education or training for the stage, would be certain to meet with failure and ruin in any effort she might make to become an actress. Do not dream of running away from your home. You are probably yourself at fault for your unhappiness.

D. R.—As the young lady does not answer your letters, it is not likely that you would gain anything by asking her to engage herself to you at present. All you can do is to endeavour to make your way where you are, and when you are able to do so, go back and see what impression you can produce. You have no way of making the young lady answer your letters; the most you can do is to ask her to write to you as a friend, for the sake of old times.

FORGET-ME-NOT.

She gave them to me in the long ago,
Only a little bunch of flow'ers blue;
On my heart I kept them—I loved them so!
They seemed like our love, strong, pure, and true.

I loved them then, and I love them yet,
Because she gave them to me with her heart.
And told me that with tears they had been wet,
And begged that from them I would never part.

But jealous, cruel time, with burning breath,
Drank from their stems the essence of her tears,
And left them flut'ring in the throat of death,
A phantom memory of those love-lit years.

I have them now, a bunch of time-dried straw,
Tied with a ribbon faded as can be;
But I shall always keep and love them more
Because she gave them, wet with tears, to me.

I. C. J.

ELLEN.—The formalities which follow the marriage of a widow can seldom be regulated in the same manner as those of a younger bride. Circumstances must control the entertainments which follow the marriage of a widow, and no fixed forms can be arranged for them. A quiet taste and refined sentiments are the best regulators of these civilities.

D. R. S.—1. Visitors should always give the servants who have waited upon them some little presents, either in money or its equivalent. They have had extra work in waiting upon them, and therefore deserve extra compensation. 2. You should always call at an hour when you would expect to find ladies prepared to receive visitors, and not at lunch or dinner-time.

LILA.—For yachting parties, young ladies wear either flannel suits of navy-blue or white, plainly but prettily trimmed with woollen braid, jaunty sailor hats, undressed kid gloves, and thick boots. A large parasol is necessary for comfort. Warm shawls should be provided, no matter how oppressive the day. A yacht may put out to sea in a calm to return in a gale.

R. N.—If you are very intimate with the lady you might have a friendly talk with her on the subject, and try to help her to see the matter in a proper light. But in no case should you send any warning to her husband, or communicate with him on the subject in any manner whatever. In fact, your husband's advice not to meddle with the affair at all would be safe to follow.

S. J. P.—In order to be an adept in conversation a person must have ideas and information. To get ideas and information a man must study and read a great deal, observe what is going on around him, and mingle with persons of intelligence. After doing all this, in order to talk well with ladies he must frequent their society and practise talking with them, and in that way learn how to do it with tact and elegance.

FRED W. F.—A person born upon the 29th of February might regard either the last day of February or the 1st of March as his birthday. The 1st of March has the stronger claim, however, because the 29th of February is the sixtieth day of the year, and so, disregarding the days of the month, the man born on February 29th may keep his birthday on the sixtieth day of every year, which in common years would fall on March 1st. On the other hand, it may be said that the 29th of February is only an extra day placed between February and March, and that one born before noon on that day should keep his birthday on February 28th in common years, and that one born after noon should keep his birthday on March 1st. Take your choice.

A. S. N. D.—All things considered, it would probably be best for you to have an explanation with your recreant lover, as it is possible that the young lady who so shamefully betrayed your friendship and confidence also deceived him, and by skilful misrepresentations made him think that you cared nothing for him. Therefore a frank and judicious correspondence with him on the subject might lead to gratifying results.

E. P. W.—It is for your cousin and her family to decide such a question among themselves. The lady probably feels a strong wish to have her dead lover's will carried out just as he intended it should be, and therefore it is natural for her to shrink from a sordid compromise, while the rest of you, having no sentimental feelings on the subject, would like to see her make sure of something substantial.

CANDIDE.—Pure nitro-glycerine is an oily, colourless liquid, prepared by introducing strong nitric and sulphuric acids into glycerine, drop by drop. Nitro-glycerine explodes by heating to a certain point, by a blow, or by the explosion, in contact with it, of any fulminate, such as fulminating mercury. When carelessly made, it sometimes explodes spontaneously, and yet this dangerous liquid can be ignited and burned like common oil, under certain conditions.

T. P.—The Suez Canal is about 100 miles long, of which 75 miles are actual canal, while for 25 miles it passes through lakes, a portion of which afforded water of sufficient depth, but the greater part of which required excavating. The width, except at those places where it runs through high ground, is 325 feet at the surface, and 72 feet at the bottom, and the depth 26 feet. Where it runs through high ground the width is 195 feet at the surface.

M. S.—1. *Requiescat in pace* means "May he rest in peace." It is a common inscription on tombstones in many countries. 2. The polar circles are drawn at a distance of 23½ degrees from the pole, because that distance marks the limits of the area within which there is found at least, one day in each year upon which the sun does not set. In the same way the tropic of Cancer and the tropic of Capricorn, drawn 23½ degrees from the Equator, mark the limits of the area in which the sun is vertical, some time in his yearly course.

PATTY L.—Your own common-sense should teach you there is no reason to believe that any ill luck attends a party of thirteen, unless, indeed, there should only be dinner for twelve. How could the fact that thirteen sat down to dinner cause one of the party to die within a year? If there were any truth in the belief the insurance companies should have found it out by this time; but we have never heard of any company which objects to its policy-holders sitting down thirteen to dinner as often as they choose.

COLLIE.—On the whole, it is always best for a girl situated as you are with regard to this matter to keep as clear of it as possible. It is natural for you to be solicitous for your schoolmate's welfare, but as she only laughs at your friendly expostulations, it is not likely that you can do anything to influence her. Were you to become an informer, by exposing her to her teachers or parents, you would probably incur her hatred, and if any serious trouble should afterwards grow out of the affair, a greater part of the blame would be apt to be laid to your charge.

R. N. W.—Probably not, at least not by any legal proceedings. In a court of law such a declaration made by her, and acted upon by the gentleman before it had been withdrawn, would be looked upon as an annulment of the engagement. But if the gentleman really loved her, and, like herself, was acting from momentary irritation, she would stand a chance of bringing him round, if she should happen to meet him under auspicious circumstances. Such a case should, if possible, be tried in the court of Cupid, rather than in a court of law.

AMINA.—You are probably both too young to think of marriage, and as your beau is yet at school, you had better not build too much upon his attentions. These youthful attachments seldom ripen into matrimony. Do not take the failure of your beau to write very seriously. He is probably idly taken up with his lessons and companions, which is natural. When he returns home he will be just as ready to wait upon you and avow his love for you as in the past. Marriage implies that the man shall have some means, and a regular employment and income.

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